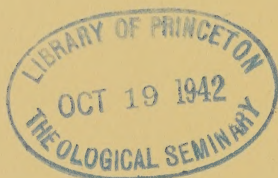


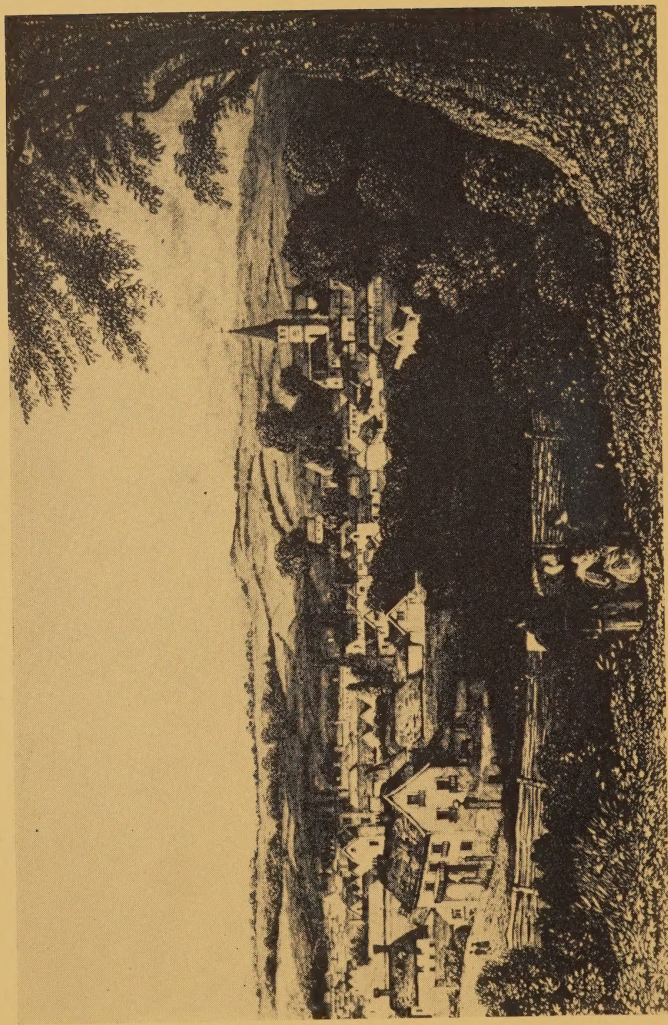
HELL'S RAMPARTS FELL

The LIFE of JOHN MURRAY

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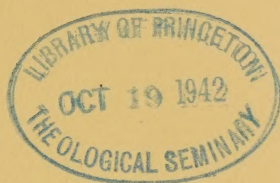


Early view of Alton, John Murray's birthplace

HELL'S RAMPARTS FELL

✓✓
THE LIFE OF JOHN MURRAY

f ✓
Clarence R. Skinner
and
Alfred S. Cole



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Dedication

To the younger generations of Universalists. May the courage, conviction and idealism which animated John Murray enter into you. May you, like him, face a strange and troubled time with a faith

*“Lofty as is the love of God,
And ample as the wants of man.”*

Out of your hopes and struggles may there come a more universal religion with healing for the peoples of all nations.

Introduction

HISTORY has a strange way of playing favorites. One man, because of some peculiarity of personality or due to some contemporary incident, is thrust before the stage curtain to take repeated bows. He catches the public fancy, storms of applause greet his every act. Whatever his part, he is ever before the public. When his last lines have been spoken and his costume is packed away in the trunk, biographers keep him alive through many centuries of changing life.

Some men, equally worthy, perhaps even more striking and significant, fail for some strange reason to capture public recognition. Perhaps the cause which they served was too much hated, perhaps others came on the scene at the moment of climax to steal their thunder. Perchance the originator was lost in the sweep of a larger and more anonymous movement.

John Murray, the subject of this biography, seems to have escaped full recognition of his powerful personality, the dramatic quality of his life and the great philosophy which he promulgated. He has been partially appreciated by a small group in America, but almost ignored in England. It was felt that at the two-hundredth anniversary of his birth an attempt should be made to popularize his life and work. This biography is part of that attempt, and it is hoped that, as a result of this work, many people will discover or rediscover John Murray.

INTRODUCTION

The chief source of information regarding the early years of the subject of this biography is to be found in the "Life of John Murray," the first part of which he wrote himself, the latter part being finished after his death by his wife. There are certain aspects of his life which he describes in full detail, such as his relationship to his father; and he goes into a minute description of his religious experiences. There are other side lights and backgrounds, however, which he almost completely ignores, such as the economic aspects of his family, their education, social status, etc. Such gaps in his life have to be filled in by watching his account closely for hints and inadvertent references. Most of the deductions in this present biography are fairly sure, although some cannot be entirely supported by documentation. The authors have corresponded with the mayor of Alton, who was good enough to give some facts about the birthplace of Murray.

The writers have been careful not to draw unwarrantably upon their imagination, and wherever they have had to fill in important omissions they have indicated that the facts seem to be thus and so according to their best judgment.

Both John Murray and his wife wrote in a style typical of the religious leaders of their time. While their vocabulary is ample and their descriptions sometimes very effective, their writing for the most part displays the exceedingly formal and stilted style of the eighteenth century. The language is at times almost unbelievably sentimental. Flowery words and streams of tears cover some of the pages, and motives imputed to people are often naive. The conversations occasionally repeated are as unreal as if they had been lifted out of *Godey's Lady's Book*, even household scenes between parents and children being as formal

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as if they were orations being delivered for a rhetorical prize.

This book, however, is almost the only available source for material touching the life of the Murrays before John left England. The Old-Country historians seem to have had little interest in the family, and Americans visiting the ancestral home in search of data have usually met with complete indifference and ignorance. After John landed on these shores it is another story, for we have a much richer source material to draw upon.

There are records in contemporary literature, notably church papers, describing Murray's work. The second wife collected three volumes of his very sketchy literary remains, mostly in the form of letters. Some town records contain interesting references and, of course, the records of such churches as Gloucester and Boston, Massachusetts, have rich source material.

Dr. Richard Eddy in his "History of Universalism in America" gives many interesting facts, but the present writers have tried to add a great deal to this material.

We are indebted to Mr. Thomas Butler of Philadelphia, who has spent a lifetime of research into the history of early America and of Universalism. Mr. Albert Perry of Tufts College assisted us by making a special study of the chaplaincy, and we are especially indebted to Miss E. Louise Jewell, for the work which she did in typing the manuscript. Dr. Emerson Hugh Lalone, manager of the Universalist Publishing House, has encouraged us in the work and has made many valuable suggestions.

The two authors have written approximately the same amount of material in the book. Professor Cole, librarian of the Universalist Historical Library,

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has been studying in this field for many years, and to him is due the credit for most of the research in connection with this Life.

Clarence R. Skinner.

Tufts College, Mass.,

July, 1941.

Chapter I

Eighteenth Century Backgrounds

THE eighteenth century in England, to paraphrase Dickens, was the best of times, and it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom and the age of incredible foolishness; it was an epoch of belief and a century of doubt; it was an age of moral retrogression and an era of religious and scientific progress. It was the spring of hope and the winter of despair. This period, like many others, was filled with both heroism and cowardice, idealism and debauchery. Virtue and evil were strangely intermingled.

England in the early part of the eighteenth century was at the ebb tide of its religious and moral life. The transition from the seventeenth century has been called "a dewless night succeeded by a sunless dawn." At no period in English history had morals sunk so low. Mark Pattison describes the age as "one of decay of religion, licentiousness of morals, public corruption, profaneness of language, an age destitute of depth and earnestness, an age whose poetry was without romance, whose philosophy was without insight, and whose public men were without character." (1) Both friend and foe agreed that Christianity was in a dying state.

In the early sixties, William Blackstone made an examination of preaching in all the leading London pulpits. After doing so he reported that he could not find in any one of the sermons audited any more of Christianity than could be found in the writings of

Cicero. Nor could he make out from the content whether the preacher was a disciple of Confucius, Mohammed or Christ. A French visitor to England at the time wrote home that if anyone discussed religion he was ridiculed. Among the so-called higher classes of society there was a feeling that Christianity was useful for keeping the lower classes in their place. The church was, in Wordsworth's phrase, "a fen of stagnant waters." A cold, lifeless "reason" was the fashionable thing, a dead, dry moderation. Spontaneity, zeal and spiritual enthusiasm were chilled and congealed. Prayer was dubbed fanaticism, while cold reason was pronounced the all-sufficient guide of life. As a result God was resolved into a bundle of barren abstractions; the Bible, which to the early reformers was the "chart and compass of life," came to be regarded simply as a book, and often a despised one at that.

The church, as a rule, did not really teach Christianity, but a prudent moralism. "We should take care never to overshoot ourselves even in the pursuit of virtues" was the counsel of one of the preachers of that age. "Whether zeal or moderation be the point we aim at, let us keep fire out of one and frost out of the other." (2) As a result, some clergymen were not only neglectful of their religious duties and opportunities but also dissipated, worldly-minded and often grossly immoral. The church was used as a means of getting an easy living. Offices were bought and sold. Many of the higher clergy lived only for worldly advancement. Joseph Addison, in the early years of the eighteenth century, drew an amusing sketch of a certain innkeeper who "had learned a great deal of politics, but not one word of religion from the parson of the parish, and had scarce any other notion of religion but that it consisted in hating Presbyterians." (3) Organ-

ized religion in the first part of the century, with certain glowing exceptions, was coldly aloof to the spiritual and material needs of the common people.

If misery, drunkenness and squalor existed among the masses it was because the life and thought of the nation were infected by the betrayal of decency and honor in high places. Some of the worst crimes were found among those who were miscalled noble. The mania for gambling reached its height during this epoch, drawing into its maw the rich and poor alike. As George O. Trevelyan says, "On whatever pretext and under whatever circumstances half a dozen people found themselves together, whether for music, or dancing, or politics, or for drinking the waters or each other's wine, the box was sure to be rattling and the cards were being cut and shuffled." (4) Before the orator and statesman, Charles James Fox, was twenty-four he had incurred gambling debts to the amount of 500,000 pounds, more than a fifth of which sum represented the losses of one evening. Companies were formed for perpetuating all kinds of wild-cat schemes; for instance, a gadget for providing perpetual motion, or discovering the Land of Ophir. Even when that fantastic, bloated venture, the South Sea Bubble, burst and reduced thousands to poverty and despair, the gambling mania received no perceptible check.

The economic changes brought about by the mechanical inventions were both radical and far-reaching. The conditions under which men had to labor in 1760 were fairly simple, for the great manufacturing cities had not yet risen and the workers were not crowded into dingy, ill-drained, poorly-lighted tenements. When the factory system was introduced with its army of laborers, so wild became the rush for wealth that nothing else was considered save space

and light for work. The horrors of industrial conditions outrival those of black slavery in America. Contemporary reports are so terrible that the reader today can scarcely believe that such ghastly stories of inhuman and infernal treatment can have a shadow of truth. Children, literally slaves, worked day and night in relays, so that the beds in which they slept never cooled, one batch following another for its share of rest in the filthy rag-piles. In the Parliamentary reports of the day we read of children less than five years of age being found at work in coal mines, while in the pin factories lads five years old were working at full capacity for twelve hours a day. One contemporary writer, apparently looking through a different set of lenses, makes an observation concerning the children working sixteen hours a day. "They seem to be always cheerful and alert; taking pleasure in the light play of their muscles. The scene of industry, so far from exciting sad emotions in my mind, was always exhilarating. It was delightful to observe the nimbleness with which they pieced broken ends and to see them at leisure after a few seconds exercise of their tiny fingers, to amuse themselves in any attitude they chose, till the stretch and winding on were once more completed. The work of these lively elves seems to resemble a sport. As to exhaustion by the day's work, they evinced no trace of it on emerging from the mill in the evening; for they immediately began to skip about any neighboring playground, and to commence their little games with the same alacrity as boys issuing from a school." (5) The crushing slavery of the workers was apparent everywhere, in spite of the mechanical advances and labor-saving devices.

Drunkenness was probably one of the cardinal sins of this unusual century. Lecky states that, small

as is the place which gin-drinking occupies in English history, it was probably, if all the consequences that flowed from it are considered, the most disastrous practice of the time. Henry Fielding in 1751 made the statement, "Should the drinking of this poison (gin) be continued at its present height during the next twenty years, there will, by that time, be very few of the common people left to drink it." (6) During the national orgy of spirit-drinking (1720-1751) crude gin was being sold from thousands of dingy dens at even a penny a pint. So great was the craving for the initial excitement and the ensuing forgetfulness, that many ginshops hung out signs inviting the poor to get intoxicated for a penny, and dead drunk for twopence; straw whereon to lie was provided without extra charge until they had slept off the effects of the first debauch and were ready to begin again. Its ravages affected all classes. The resulting welter of national drunkenness, Bishop Benson declared, had made the English people "what they never before were, cruel and inhuman." (7) Ministers of State reeled to their places in Parliament or at the opera. Sometimes even clergymen, with their wigs awry, went into their pulpits to hiccough in the pauses of the discourse. The wreck of talent caused by intemperance, the untimely death of individuals who might have been beacon-lights in a perverse generation but who left nothing behind except painful memories of needless error and suffering, fill the student of this age with a sense of shame and loss. What might have been accomplished, what an order might have been built with the tools of the Industrial Revolution if this besotting sin had not blighted the nation! In 1736 an act was passed designed to prohibit the liquor trade, but getting no public support it was still-born. Not until 1751, when the strong temperance teachings

of the Evangelical Revival had been heard throughout the land, did the law prevail.

The cruelty and moral darkness of the times are reflected in the penal system. A study of the eighteenth century prison relics in the London Museum will reveal something of the horrible conditions which existed in the earlier half of that century, especially from 1720 to 1750. The revelations of John Howard, who began his historic crusade against general prison conditions in 1773, were terrible. Here are one or two examples from Howard's reports. At Ely, the prison being unsafe, "the jailor had tried to secure the inmates by chaining them down on their backs upon the floor, placing an iron collar with spikes about their necks, and a heavy iron bar over their legs." (8) Of Knaresborough jail, in 1776, Howard says: "It is under a hall of difficult access, the door being about four feet from the ground. Only one room about twelve feet square, earth floor; no fireplace; very offensive; a common sewer from the town running through it uncovered—an officer confined here took a dog with him to defend him from vermin, but the dog was soon destroyed and the prisoner's face much disfigured by them." (9) There were on the statute books one hundred and sixty offenses punishable by death. In spite of the ferocious punishments inflicted in the jails and "dens" of the period, crime mounted at an alarming pace. The jails were filled with people awaiting transportation to the penal colonies, or the car that should convey them to Tyburn. The frequent public executions at Newgate and in the country towns were occasions for the gathering of vast numbers of spectators in holiday mood. Men who owed a few pounds which they were unable to pay languished in prison, and women were hanged for petty thefts. The police system was little more than a

farce, so the ruling classes devised a cruel penal code as a defense of their "property rights." It is indeed a depressing record, that of penal codes and prisons in eighteenth century England. About the only consolation certain writers could find in the situation was in noting that the conditions in France were worse.

No historical era can be explained simply in terms of its failings, moral lapses, and crimes alone. The good and constructive elements are so bound up with the retrogressive tendencies that at certain periods it is hard to separate or recognize them. In that amazing eighteenth century we find the advancing control of natural forces, the growth of the Industrial Revolution and the beginnings of a material progress over wide areas, never before experienced by man. Manufacturing enterprises were revolutionized during this period. The most marked improvement resulted from the invention of machinery. James Watt constructed his first steam engine, thus doing away with the necessity of locating the cotton mills near water power. Steam boilers heated by coal fires became a source of unlimited power. In 1767 James Hargreaves invented his spinning jenny, capable of spinning eight threads of cotton instead of one. Samuel Crompton's mule-jenny, Cartwright's power-loom and similar inventions gave Britain her pre-eminence in textile fabrics. Thus in response to the demands of commerce for large quantities of cheap textiles, we find that in the last half of the eighteenth century machines were invented which radically changed not only methods of labor but the way of living for millions. The Industrial Revolution, of course, had its dark side, but with it came a social conscience which called for the socialization of all its benefits.

Two great revolutions shook the social order to its foundations. The beginnings of the democratic

experiment in America had a far-reaching effect upon English affairs. In 1789, when the impact of the radical industrial changes were being felt, the French Revolution broke out. The fall of the Bastille, whose somber gray walls stood for the tyranny of the old order, was the signal for the passing of the ancient regime. The forces of a new world were pressing against the bastions of medievalism.

This era was a time of extraordinary achievements in many fields. Dr. Samuel Johnson's circle alone made the second half of the eighteenth century a period of enlightenment. It included such men as David Garrick, the great actor, who did so much to revive Shakespearean drama; Sir Joshua Reynolds, one of the greatest English painters; Edmund Burke, one of the wisest of English statesmen; Oliver Goldsmith, whose "Vicar of Wakefield" and "She Stoops to Conquer" were noted contributions to the novel and drama; Edward Gibbon, whose monumental work, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," remains one of the best evidences of historical scholarship. These men alone would have made the century memorable.

Perhaps one of the greatest single influences for good was the breaking up of the cold, formal, stilted religion of the day under the impact of the revival movement led by John Wesley, George Whitefield and their associates. The pendulum had swung far towards the side of disintegration. Now under the skillful guidance of John Wesley it was to swing over to the side of growth and a life-changing faith.

There were many noted men who labored in eighteenth century England whose influence was widespread and beneficial. Towering over all, however, in universality of influence and range of achievement, were John Wesley and the religious revival to

which he gave his name and life. He cannot be left out of the national life of England. As Augustine Binnell writes in an enthusiastic vein, "No single figure influenced so many minds, no single voice touched so many hearts, no other man did such a life's work for his country." (10) In 1738 Wesley experienced conversion at a meeting of a religious society in Aldersgate Street. One of the most dramatic scenes of his long life was enacted near the city of Bristol in 1739, when he took his stand on a hillside to preach his first outdoor sermon before an audience of 3,000 people. That step was the beginning of an evangelistic movement destined in a few years to spread throughout England, Scotland, Ireland, and across the Atlantic to America.

Wesley looked with prophetic vision on the England of his day. It was not especially friendly to prophets and disturbers of the status quo. It was the England of the slave-trader, the kidnaper and the smuggler, the England of trading justices and South Sea Bubbles, the England of gin shops, sodden ignorance and horrible neglect of childhood. It was the England of corrupt politics and a dry, soulless religion; the England of "dim ideals" and "expiring hopes." Wesley, barred from the pulpits of the Established Church, of which he was a faithful member to the day of his death, hated by the majority of the clergy and upper classes, who instigated persecutions and mob violence against him, turned to the common people and disinherited classes. John Kirby, the rector of Blackmanstoke, writing in 1750, speaks of the "horrid blasphemies and impieties taught by those diabolical seducers called Methodists." "Their religion," he declares, "could be forged no-else but in the bottomless pit." Warning the public against "Methodist Meetings," he cries: "You should be as much afraid

to come near their assemblies as you would to put your hand into the den of a cockatrice." (11)

The early development of the Revival Movement is filled with persecutions, mob violence and hatred of the Methodists. Again and again Wesley owed his life to his presence of mind, his coolness and courage. Often he preached, like other leaders of the movement, in the midst of showers of stones or rotten eggs. At St. Ives, just to give a few examples, the congregation were attacked with cudgels, and everything in the room where they were assembled was broken in pieces. At Devizes a water-engine played upon the house where he was staying. His horses were seized. The house of one of his supporters was ransacked, and bulldogs were let loose upon him. At Dublin, Whitefield was almost stoned to death. Scenes of this kind were of continual occurrence and against all these things Wesley and his followers had to contend. Frequently the leaders of a mob would be silenced and cowed before the fearless and venerable preacher.

It was the old story of the impact of a great mind upon a corrupt age. A recent historian thus described the effect of Wesley's preaching: "He swept the dead air with an irresistible cleansing ozone. To thousands of men and women his preaching and gospel revealed a new heaven and a new earth. No one was too poor, too humble, or too degraded to be born again." (12)

For forty years Wesley traveled four or five thousand miles a year. Blessed with an iron frame and possessing perfect health, it was nothing unusual for him to walk twenty-five miles a day over hard roads and to preach six or seven times. In his old age he stated that he did not remember having felt lowness of spirits for a quarter of an hour since his birth. An entry in his journal of December 28, 1742, states

that he preached at five and eight o'clock in the morning at Newcastle, then walked seven miles to Tanfield Lea, and after preaching there walked back to Newcastle to preach again at four. When he was eighty-five he once delivered more than eighty sermons in eight weeks. During the greater part of his career he was accustomed to preach 800 sermons a year, and it was computed that in the fifty years of his itinerant life he traveled a quarter of a million miles and preached more than 40,000 sermons. This methodical, conservative and well-disciplined man, fired with a tremendous zeal for his Master's cause, made such an impact upon his age as finally to change the whole trend of social history throughout the British Empire.

Because of the power and vitality of his preaching, Wesley aroused the social conscience of all classes against such evils as slavery and the horrible penal system. His "Thoughts on Slavery" published in 1774 had a great influence upon this ghastly traffic in human beings. His courage in taking this stand may be judged by the fact that at the time half the wealth of Liverpool was derived from the slave trade. In his "Serious Advice to the People of England," he said: "We have lost our Negro trade. I would to God it may never be found more; that we may never more steal and sell our brethren like beasts; never murder them by thousands and tens of thousands. Never was anything such a reproach to England since it was a nation as thus having a hand in this execrable traffic." (13) During his long lifetime Wesley continually visited the prisons. By his enduring heroism, by the contagion of his personality, he set in motion forces that brought about far-reaching results in prison reform.

Another preacher closely associated with Wesley in the Evangelical Revival was George Whitefield.

Unlike Wesley, whose strong enthusiasm was always curbed by a powerful will, Whitefield was chiefly a creature of impulse and emotion. He had very little logical skill, no great depth or range of knowledge, and nothing of the great organizing ability or discipline of mind which his colleague possessed. At the same time it would be difficult to find a more zealous, lovable and truly unselfish man.

It was a dramatic step when Whitefield in 1739 instituted "Field Preaching in London." Because the pulpits of so many churches were closed against him and the need around him was so great, he decided to seek his audiences out of doors. Appalled at the conditions of vice and brutality existing in the neighborhood of the great city, he determined to bring his message to the disinherited and the poor. Again and again his organ-like voice charged with emotional intensity melted hard and hostile audiences into tears. Under the open sky in winter and summer, on street corners, in fields and halls, Whitefield called upon his hearers to repent that they might escape damnation. Of course such a powerful preacher was bound to make enemies in high places and in ecclesiastical positions of power. On many occasions, like his colleague Wesley, he was mobbed and on one occasion barely escaped with his life from the fury of a Dublin mob.

During his thirty-four years of active service Whitefield preached eighteen thousand times, or on an average of ten times a week. He visited every corner of Great Britain and in all made seven voyages to America, preaching in all the seaboard colonies from York in the state of Maine to the southern extremity of Georgia. A curious and humorous example of the power of his preaching is found in Benjamin Franklin's writings. Whitefield was very much interested in establishing an orphanage in Georgia, and once

while preaching in Philadelphia Franklin heard him. The latter strongly disapproved of the Georgia scheme, for the state was but thinly populated at the time and workmen and materials were scarce. He wanted the orphanage to be located in Philadelphia, and determined not to give anything for the other project. "I perceived," he said, "that he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the copper. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that and determined me to give the silver, and he finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all." (14)

Take the emotional drive, purity of mind, and dramatic preaching power of Whitefield, and combine these with the organizing ability and almost military discipline of Wesley, and the results were bound to be amazing. The fires of hope and faith were relit. The social conscience was aroused against the evils of the day, slavery, economic exploitation and the horrible prison system. The freshening breeze of a religious revival and the mighty winds of revolution together cleared the atmosphere.

Lights and shadows, saintliness and debauchery, savage exploitation and the struggle for justice, a moribund religion and a flaming faith, all these helped to weave the pattern of the eighteenth century in England. This remarkable era plainly reveals the shame and the weakness but also the glory and power of human nature. It is a good gauge showing how deep man can sink into the mire and how high he can rise.

Chapter II

Heritage and Childhood

THE eighteenth century described in the previous chapter, with its dynamic and strange contradictions, was in full swing when an infant named John Murray uttered his first thin cry of protest against the rigors of Calvinism. The child was born on Dec. 10, 1741, in the town of Alton, a village situated on the river Wey, forty-eight miles southwest of London. One of the most beautiful sections of England, this region was made famous by Gilbert White, whose studies of the "Natural History of Selborne" were conducted not more than five miles away.

Alton was a typical English rural community, surrounded by wide, lush meadows made vivid green by frequent rains and fogs. The river flowed lazily by the village, and cattle could be seen standing knee-deep in its shallow waters. Century-old oaks, beeches, and elms lined the streets and cast a heavy shade over the comings and goings of the inhabitants. There was a market near the center of the village where householders gathered two or three days a week to gossip and exchange pigs and sheep.

In the dignified home of the "squire" the pattern of upper class life was carefully guarded. Hunts, teas, dances, charities and the social amenities were maintained as sacred rites and rituals. Around the fireplace indignant protests were made against the new "isms" which were threatening the foundations of the established order.

The middle class townsfolk lived in thatched homes surrounded by high hedges, giving the families a sense of privacy and security. The workers were crowded into small, ill-heated, poor cottages gathered around the one industry in the community. Gilbert White, who was a contemporary of Murray, says that the women of Selborne, "formerly in the dead months—availed themselves greatly by spinning wool, for making Barragons, a genteel carded stuff, much in vogue at that time for Summer wear; and chiefly manufactured at Alton, a neighboring town, by some of the people called Quakers." (1) From White's comments, it is safe to say that the worst evils of industrialism had not yet developed in this vicinity.

The main livelihood of the people was derived from trade and agriculture, this section of England being one of the most famous for hop-growing. Farms and forests stretched for miles on all sides. The new economic forces which were seething in the great cities were dimly felt in such rural communities.

There were at least three houses of worship in the town: the Presbyterian church, a Quaker meeting-house, and the Episcopal Church of St. Lawrence. Parts of this last-mentioned building are from the tenth century, and present at least three styles of architecture. Bitter fighting had taken place within its doors in the days of Oliver Cromwell, and bullet holes are still visible in its walls.

Among the notable institutions of the vicinity was a so-called "free grammar school" of considerable reputation. It was founded in the reign of Charles I, and was located in Anstey, in the parish of Alton. The youth of the upper classes were here drilled and disciplined in the classical system of education which then obtained. Only a highly selected group was ever

privileged to enter its doors, and they were trained for the functions of the social aristocracy.

Outwardly, Alton was like many other communities of its day and generation—a quiet country place, where life for the most part flowed on its uneventful way, but where there were occasional stirrings of profound new movements and events.

In such an environment John Murray, the subject of this biography, lived the early years of his life, and grew to be a stout English lad. It is natural to raise the question as to what extent the heredity and environment of the Murray family account for the career of its most distinguished son. Both these influences are difficult to trace in any man's life. But in the case of John Murray it would seem that both heredity and environment were conspiring to produce a remarkable career. This child was to develop into one of the most dramatic and significant characters of his day—a day replete with figures of giant proportions. The stage on which he played his part included two continents. He was intimately associated with a world-shaking revolution; was actively engaged in one of the greatest religious revivals ever known; and he finally became the vivid symbol of a religious movement which has encircled the earth.

The family background of John Murray was extremely interesting. His progenitors, so far as is known, were men and women of widely different temperaments, but of stout conviction and strength of character. The child's heritage endowed him with conflicting influences which continuously emerge in his character and which seem to have had much to do with his mercurial emotional make-up.

The paternal grandmother, whom he remembered, was, as he says, "in the morning and meridian of her life, a celebrated beauty. The remains of a fine face

were visible when I knew her. I never beheld a more beautiful old lady." (2) Perhaps the boy romanticized his grandmother; but, taking this tendency into consideration, the woman emerges from the few scanty facts known about her as a person of unusual quality. Her family (Barroux) had been of the French nobility, living in considerable luxury on the Loire river near Nantes. She was brought to England for an education. Here she found her husband and turned from the Catholic Church to the Presbyterian persuasion. Both of these adventures permanently exiled her from her homeland. Her father disowned her, but died soon after this emotional outburst, leaving his daughter in England as his only rightful heir.

Murray's grandmother was soon to have a severe test of her mettle, for she was tempted by two French priests to forswear the "damnable doctrines" of her newly avowed religion and enter into the family fortunes and estates as a reward. "My grandmother and my father," says Murray, "after a conference which continued but a few moments, cheerfully concurred in a relinquishment" of all the emoluments which might accrue to her, "and united in declaring that, on terms so calculated to prostrate their integrity, they would not accept the whole kingdom of France." (3) The monetary value of the living was estimated at five hundred pounds per year. For that time and place this amount was considered bounteous.

The finances of the gracious lady's family, despite the heroic refusal of a fortune, were much better than average, providing for all the necessities and some of the lesser luxuries of the life of that day. This good grandmother was known as the "Lady Bountiful" of the parish. She cultivated an extensive garden from which she "distilled samples" and probably dispensed

herb teas and cure-alls for the ills of the poorer people in the neighborhood.

The paternal grandfather seems a dim figure, overshadowed by the greater luster of his wife. Nothing is definitely known of his activities or character except that, as Murray expresses it, he had a negative religion and was sensible enough to give the training of his children into the hands of his very capable spouse. We infer from the economic status of the home that he was of the middle class and that he had achieved some degree of prosperity.

The maternal grandfather, James Rolt, was English and, so far as is known, with a long English ancestry behind him. Murray knew him well. Apparently in his early years he was the black sheep of the family, for he had the reputation of being a gay Lothario, bringing much pain and displeasure to his wife. The conditions set forth in the former chapter were an irresistible lure for the weak and the sensual. Grandfather Rolt, in the days of his youth, did not have the inner resources to fight off the tempter's snare, so he became, in the prevailing Calvinistic terminology, lost and damned. Apparently his dissipation continued into the early years of his married life, even the arrival of children in his family failing to sober and steady his mercurial character.

Suddenly, however, like so many men of his time, he passed through a stormy religious revival and was converted from his ways of wickedness and profligacy. Action and reaction were equal, and in the opposite direction, so he became "severely pious." His new life was considered by the family as nothing short of a miracle. Grandfather was henceforth to be treasured as one of the priceless heritages of the family.

The maternal grandmother remains very much in the shadow, with only an occasional hint as to the de-

tails of her character. Murray remembered her as pale and physically weak, a condition brought about by constant anxiety about her *bon vivant* husband. Psychologists have much to say about the suppressions of the "female of the species" during this era, and probably this woman, described as the "silent suffering" type, was the victim of many conflicting and thwarted emotions. Apparently the conversion of her husband came too late to allow his wife to regain robust health. Or perhaps the severity of his piety brought new difficulties to her already overburdened psyche. It is certain that she was considered "very pious," and was probably thought of as an example of extreme spirituality because of her delicate health. Women of the period were more highly differentiated from men than they are today, and they were constantly reminded of the limitations of their sex.

The member of the family who most profoundly influenced the child John and about whom most is known is the father. If there is such a thing as a typical eighteenth-century Calvinistic *pater familias*, he was certainly it. Stern to the point of cruelty, unrelaxing in the rigors of discipline, distant and pious, the family held him in awe and fear.

Both the father and mother of John Murray were children of converts, and this fact undoubtedly had something to do with the almost fanatical extremes of their religious emphasis. Conversion, unless it is of the extremely superficial type caused by yielding to outside pressure, means a grappling with principles, a rethinking of fundamental positions. This in turn produces a new clarity of definition and enthusiasm for the new-found truth. We have seen that such was the case for the parents of both Mr. and Mrs. Murray, and it partly explains why they took their Calvinism so seriously. On the one hand there

was the awful example of James Rolt to hold before the family and to make parents more than usually solicitous. On the other hand was the *grande dame* with her eagerness for the new faith and her prestige both financial and personal, which caused everyone to bring up the children in the way she thought they should go.

There were also the pitfalls and traps which eighteenth-century England set for the unsuspecting youth: its dissoluteness, drunkenness and vice. These conditions alone would cause a conscientious parent to be more than careful about the moral welfare of his offspring.

It is natural, therefore, that John Murray's father should have become an extreme example of the sternness typical of the extreme English Protestantism. His constant punishments, such as resounding whacks on the ear, or a good stiff caning, were not done in anger. John remarks that his father always controlled his temper before meting out "justice" to his trembling sons and daughters. He was thoroughly righteous both in his own eyes and in the esteem of his neighbors.

His religious views are recounted in great detail, for it was this which apparently most impressed the son. He was a member of the Episcopal Church and a deep-dyed Calvinist of the strictest sort. He evidently had frequent recourse to the rod so as not to spoil the child. As was the custom at the time, the father felt a most solemn and awful responsibility for the soul of his offspring, and expected to be called upon by his God for a reckoning. Some intimation of the spiritual rigors which Murray's father practiced can be seen from the fact that he regularly rose at four o'clock in the morning, winter and summer, for a long period of prayers and devotion for the entire

family. He fervently prayed at stated intervals during the day, and in the evening he again called the entire family together for devotions. He was incessantly reminding his children of their sins, and overruled his wife's tendency towards mercy and love. He was an avid reader of serious literature, including such fields as philosophy, theology, and, of course, the Bible. He was known as a scholarly man, intellectually vigorous, decided in his views, and able to hold his own in an argument.

We might sum up his character by describing him as stiff and unyielding. He was a grave, intensely religious tyrant in his home, yet one who was motivated by the noblest of desires both for his family and for the world. He dared not express his affections to his children lest such sentiment make them soft and yielding. He was a person to hold in awe, not one to love. John writes of him: "I was studious to avoid his presence, and I richly enjoyed his absence." A sad commentary, but a feeling unfortunately too often experienced in that day and especially in households of that faith.

Not a direct word do we find about the occupation or economic status of Mr. Murray, but we deduce from indirect references that he, like others of the family, was of the middle class. In the autobiography we find references to the "several domestics" who were a part of the household. This would of course preclude any possibility that the family income was limited to the miserable pittance which usually fell to the lot of the "working classes," or that he was even a clerk in some commercial house. He must have had a position of some considerable influence and prestige, and he must have moved in social circles of the upper middle class group. Mr. Murray at one time was called to Ireland in connection with his business, which showed that he must have been engaged in commerce and that

he was a person entrusted with a considerable degree of responsibility in connection with it.

Mr. Murray was an invalid during many years of the latter part of his life, and gave up business entirely; but the estates of his mother and his own savings seem to have been sufficient to maintain the large family in comfort. The rental of several houses was a portion of this income, so we classify the Murrays (at least during the latter years) as belonging to the landlord class.

We are justified in assuming that the Murray home was always a comfortable one, where both parents and children were privileged to enjoy some of the amenities of life.

The mother of John, daughter of the sinner-saint James Rolt, is not etched with much clearness, except that we are frequently told that she loved her children tenderly. She was a Presbyterian and may therefore be presumed to have been as thoroughly Calvinistic in her theological convictions as was her austere husband. John says that his mother acquiesced in the strictness of his father's discipline, partly because she shared his views and partly because it was the custom of the day to leave such matters wholly to the paternalistic discretion of the man of the family. She brought forth a large family: four sons and five daughters, a number which in those days, however, was not remarkable. When she was left a widow, she had thrust upon her suddenly the management of this large brood, and John tells us that she performed the arduous task with equal love, discretion, and tact. Apparently she was able to relax her austerity more successfully than Mr. Murray, Senior, for the children sometimes came to her in moments of impulsive affection, rushing into her arms and shedding "copious tears"—a sure sign of God's approval. The children

maintained for her a feeling of tenderness and warmth.

Such were the parents of the child who was destined to play so large a part in the religious history of America.

John Murray, the first child of the family, apparently was born with precarious health, for he was privately baptized by the Episcopal minister, a rite which is usually thus administered only for infants who might be in danger of leaving this vale of tears in an unregenerate state. If the surmise of ill health be sound, John soon outgrew it, for he early became an exceptionally rugged child, with fair complexion, and roly-poly in shape. His disposition as a small child was apparently model (at least he admits it), and the family had no further reason for worrying over his health.

An interesting incident occurred when he was about two years old. His sister was baptized in the regular manner in the church and he was "presented to the congregation" at the same time, that is, he was publicly recognized as having been baptized. The priest gave a prayer, and then, greatly to the astonishment of all present, the baby answered with a resounding "Amen"—the first word he ever pronounced. Whether this incident ever actually occurred is, of course, problematical. It might very well be part of the glamor which legend lends to fact. If such an occurrence actually did happen in such a religious home and in such a Calvinistic church, it would have been considered a significant omen for the future, and would have given his parents immense satisfaction.

John grew into boyhood with few if any of the usual diseases of childhood. He was physically robust, and extremely fond of walking. A servant was delegated for the purpose of following the child as he rambled around the neighborhood, played in the dirt,

and explored the mysteries of the world. A love of nature was one of his first characteristics, and it never forsook him as long as he lived. He lays to this habit of constant exercise and outdoor life the sound constitution which was to stand him in good stead in later years of emotional and physical strain. He mentions that on some of these rambles he experienced some "hairbreadth escapes" which astonished his parents. Just what the nature of such adventures may have been we are not told; but presumably he climbed trees, haystacks, fell over rocks, bumped his head, and experienced the usual hard knocks of a child experimenting with reality.

At the proper time, after many misgivings and forebodings on the part of the father, John started to school. At that time there was nothing analagous to our public school. The children of farmers, artisans, traders, and industrial workers, if they got any education at all, procured it in some sort of struggling private institution whose fee was anything from eighteen shillings a year per child, with family reductions for several children. Millions of people of this period were never inside a school of any description. Multitudes received some rough "rule of thumb" training in apprenticeship to some trade or craft. There were some charity institutions for the poor. These were usually under the control of the Church and staffed by half-starved and half-illiterate teachers. A reasonably adequate schooling was obtainable only by the middle and upper classes at the few private institutions which maintained high standards. John Murray must have attended one of the latter, because he received enough scholastic training to equip him for a later life of intense intellectual activity, involving a great deal of writing and sharp debate.

John, like so many boys of all periods of history,

considered his schooling as an abridgment of his freedom and as a major catastrophe. He says, "This was my first affliction." It did not take long, however, for him to readjust himself to the new regime, for he further comments, "To imperious necessity, the sweet pliability of human nature soon conformed my mind: nay, it was more than conformed; I derived even felicity from the approbation of my school dame, from the pictures in my books, and especially from the acquaintance I formed with my schoolmates." (4)

The expression "approbation of my school dame" apparently implies that he was an apt pupil, faithful in his work and intellectually eager to learn. His good relations with other children show a nature highly social, taking pleasure in the company of others of his age and engaging in normal play.

We have no specific information as to how rapidly he went through the various early stages of his formal education, but we do know that at six years of age he could read an entire chapter of the Bible. He would frequently mispronounce words, but never paused. Sometimes his father would allow himself one of his rare laughs at these mistakes and would say, "This boy sticks at nothing; he has a most astonishing invention, how it is he utters such sounds, and passes on with such rapidity, I cannot conceive." (5) Usually the father would give the boy a resounding whack on the ears as admonition.

To be able to read the Bible at sight at six years of age, even if imperfectly, certainly argues for an alert mind and swift progress through the initial stages of his academic career.

What did a small boy do for recreation and how did he spend his time in such a community? There was little or no organized play, for, in those days, the child was to be seen but not heard. It was wholly an

adult-centered civilization. There was nothing to take the place of playgrounds, scouting, dramatics, hiking parties, picnics, or camping. There were no baseball, basketball or extra curricula activities connected with academic institutions. No books were published for children other than those used in the schools for formal education. There were not even any Sunday schools, for it was assumed that the youngest boys and girls could and should understand the long theological sermons delivered at adult services.

The small boy of Alton, however, was not wholly helpless. For one thing a child was usually a member of a large family, so that a household like that of the Murrays bore some resemblance to a club. But when the father was present the youngsters were compelled to remain inaudible and as nearly as possible immovable. This family was a very happy one when the pater was not present, and John had a great affection for his brothers and sisters. The children of Alton had the whole countryside to play in, and John undoubtedly found it possible to amuse himself by exploring the neighborhood. Even as a little child he said that he loved to play and work in the garden. His inclinations were strongly in the direction of an outdoor life of vigorous exercise. Recreation, however, was restricted, for laughter and spontaneous joy were suspected to be evidences of depravity. A pall of solemnity and repression pervaded the daily life of even the children. Rigid discipline in school and in the home was the rule among those who were not of the dissolute and vicious classes.

If the daily life of the family was considered to be an example of extreme and almost fanatic religiousness, Sunday was the quintessence of grave and solemn concern over the welfare of the soul. The day was set aside from early morning to late at night for

intense preoccupation with the worship of God and the search to know His will. The memory of this day remained vividly in John's mind and he thus describes it in his autobiography:

"Sunday was a day much to be dreaded in our family. We were all awakened at early dawn, private devotions attended, breakfast hastily dismissed, shutters closed, no light from the back part of the house, no noise could bring any part of the family to the window, not a syllable was uttered upon secular affairs; everyone who could read, children and domestics, had their allotted chapters. Family prayer succeeded, after which Baxter's 'Saints Everlasting Rest' was assigned to me; my mother all the time in terror lest the children should be an interruption. At last the bell summoned us to church, whither in solemn order we proceeded: I close to my father, who admonished me to look straight forward and not to let my eyes wander after vanity. At church I was fixed at his elbow, compelled to kneel when he kneeled, to stand when he stood, to find the Psalm, Epistle, Gospel, and collects for the day; and any instance of inattention was vigilantly marked, and unrelentingly punished when I returned from church. I was ordered to my closet and when I came forth, the chapter from which the preacher had taken his text was read, and I was then questioned respecting the sermon, a part of which I could generally repeat. Dinner, as breakfast, was taken in silent haste, after which we were not suffered to walk, even in the garden, but everyone must either read, or hear reading, until the bell gave the signal for the afternoon devotions, from which we returned to private devotions, to reading, to catechizing, to examination, and long family prayer, which closed the most laborious day of the week. It was the custom for many of our visiting friends to unite with us in these

evening exercises, to the no small gratification of my father: it is true, especially after he became an invalid, he was often extremely fatigued, but, upon these occasions, the more he suffered the more he rejoiced since his reward would be the greater, and indeed his sufferings, of every description, were to him a never failing source of consolation."(6)

It is hard for us in these days, when the "New England conscience" is a memory, to understand what went on inside the heart and head of a genuine Calvinist who took his faith with solemnity. According to the prophet of Geneva, an eternity in Hell was as real as eternal bliss in Heaven, and that was as real as one's own village. It was logical to sacrifice immediate pleasures, which at most could last only seventy years, for an eternity; and eternity was the subject of contemplation, instruction and warning from infancy throughout all one's days. The frame of reference in those days was "from everlasting to everlasting." Immortality was an unchallenged assumption among the devout. What we would call the cruelty of parents and teachers was in reality simply unbounded concern for the immortal souls of their children.

It is a popular fashion today to interpret history (especially the biographies of great men) in terms of psychoanalysis. If Germany goes to war, Hitler has a frustration neurosis. Napoleon had an inferiority complex, so France conquered the world. Mussolini spent some time in a prison, so he had to have half of Africa to overcome his claustrophobia. These interpretations have much truth and plausibility. What Calvin was supposed to suffer from may not be known as yet; but if he were to be "psyched" there would undoubtedly come to light some major trauma of his infancy which might throw light on his gloomy philosophy. Perchance something made him a sadist, de-

lighting in vivid pictures of the rejected of God agonizing in Hell.

To call such men as Murray's father sadists or masochists, however, would be to commit the common error of judging them by standards of another century, and by another system of philosophy. They were not driven to their acts of almost brutal sternness by an inner psychological compulsion, but by the desire to conform to a dominant form of culture which was a vital part of their milieu. As with so many systems of thinking and living, they were more logical than we can realize, if we can but grant their fundamental hypotheses. What parent, if he *knew* the reality of Heaven or Hell, would allow his offspring to drift into everlasting damnation if by being strict, even to sternness, he could prevent it? Those parents and leaders were normal people acting on the basis of an ideology which seemed to them self-evident and inescapable.

The effect on the children, however, was frustrating and cruel, no matter what the motive or how sound the logic. Every impulse to natural behavior was suspect, and spontaneous joy, which we today sedulously cultivate, was evidence of the most depraved frivolity. Three-year-olds were lectured on their unforgivable sins and the horrors which they deserved if they so much as enjoyed the deceitful pleasures of this worldly life.

John Murray suffered as other children of his day suffered. He says of himself that he was naturally gay, very social in his interests, and spontaneous in his friendliness with other children. As he looked back upon his youthful days, he says that he could not remember anything vicious or in any sense depraved about his inclinations or impulses. He was so constantly watched, beaten and admonished, however, that he lived in constant terror. He was afraid of his

father, and was never able to think of him as long as he lived without a feeling of panic. He feared God with a terror and trembling which were overwhelming. He knew that he must be one of the damned, and could not enjoy any pleasure without an immediate remorse. The very fact that he had enjoyed any innocent childish game was one more added proof that he was fallen and depraved.

John and his companions stole their rare hours dedicated "to madness and to joy" by deceiving their parents and themselves. They were early forced into introspection and were constantly in conflict both with their own emotions and with society. A premature melancholy was looked upon by Mr. Murray, Senior, as evidence of God's election, so tears were cultivated by all the members of the family. Children were forced into abnormal semblance of sorrow, and the more they wept the more they won the approbation of their elders.

Prayers that were unaccompanied by tears "streaming down the cheeks" were ineffectual, and both Mr. Murray and John seem to have been extraordinarily eloquent in prayer. The effect of assuming this outward semblance of piety and "God-fearingness" on the part of the young was either to make them preternaturally solemn or to make them hypocrites. Both conditions were unsound and harmful.

It is not strange that psychologists testify to the evil results of Calvinism on character. Masochism—the enjoyment of one's own suffering; sadism—the enjoyment of suffering in others; sexual perversion and frustration; suppression and repression complexes; rebellion against parental discipline; fear of family and of God; hatred of all religion—these and more were among the results of this gloomy and dismal theological discipline.

Chapter III

Growing Up in Ireland

IN John's eleventh year (1751) the Murray family moved to Ireland. These years in the Emerald Isle were extremely important for John Murray's development, for here he went through the *Sturm und Drang* of adolescence.

The paternal grandmother lived in the city of Cork. While she was not surrounded by splendor, she was nevertheless ensconced in a very comfortable "mansion" with some vestiges of financial ease. This strong and estimable woman had lost her first husband and was remarried to a gentleman named Beattie, who seems to have had a social position of some importance. His son was governor of the fortress at Cork. This second husband, however, did not live long, and Madam Beattie did not venture again into the experience of matrimony. It is more than likely that the removal of the Murrays from England was in part motivated by the desire to be near their grandmother. It is also conceivable that she offered some financial considerations to compensate for so radical a move.

Mr. Murray, when he had closed his affairs in Alton and was ready for the journey, insisted upon taking his oldest son with him. The rest of the family was to be sent on after proper arrangements were made in the new home. John dreaded this trip with his fear-inspiring elder, but he enjoyed the adventure of traveling in new and exciting parts of the world. Of course he went up to London and was

properly impressed with the great city. They traveled to Bristol and there a misadventure happened which might have ended the life of this eleven-year-old. He was fond of "escapades and hair-breadth escapes" and he certainly staged one here. At the small town of Pill, five miles from Bristol, father and son were staying a brief time. John wandered down to the river edge, to a point where the tide of the Bristol river is very rapid. Finding a small boat conveniently empty, the small boy stepped into it and pushed it from the shore, whence he was carried swiftly with the stream. Unfortunately for Calvinism, the tide was flowing *in* and not *out*. If the reverse had been the case, the boy would probably have been drowned at sea. Soon, however, he came alongside a larger boat, made fast, and there awaited developments. Mr. Murray was roused with both fear and indignation, and, securing the help of some men, scoured the surrounding territory. About midnight the adventurer was discovered, brought back to the inn, and was being made ready for a tall caning when the woman in charge of the hostel interceded. Much to John's amazement, his father softened, and even allowed himself the luxury and sin of a few words of gratification that his son had been saved.

An interesting commentary on the conditions of travel in those days is found in the fact that father and son were detained nine weeks altogether, waiting for favorable winds to take them across the sea to Ireland! The result of this delay was that the entire Murray family arrived in their new home almost simultaneously, instead of Mr. Murray and John arriving early as an advance guard preparing for the others.

The sources of information give us no inkling as to the reason for this change of countries. Nothing is said about the kind of business which Mr. Murray

entered, or how the change affected their economic status. We seem to be amply justified, however, in deducing that their social position was still that of the upper middle class, and that there was no deprivation.

It must be remembered that the Murrays were English, and there is no reason to suppose the native Irish were wholly happy to have them living on their soil. The Murrays, however, seemed to have a genius for friendship, so they may have been able to overcome the handicap of their foreign origin with some of the people. They were, nevertheless, probably looked upon as belonging to the exploiting class by the poor inhabitants, as Ireland still smarted from the injustices of English Protestants.

A very pleasing home was selected near the city of Cork, where the grandmother, as noted above, had taken up her residence. John was delighted with the opportunity to play in her garden, and he became an enthusiastic horticulturist. He made many forays into the surrounding neighborhood in search of rare specimens of plants and took a keen interest in transplanting them into flower-beds about their new home.

A tragedy overtook the family after they had lived in Ireland about a year, when the house and practically everything in it were completely destroyed by fire. As the father ran from the building with the youngest child in his arms, a part of the house fell in. If their flight had been delayed one more minute, he and the child would have been trapped and burned. To Mr. Murray this was new evidence of God's special grace, and added new fervor to his religious zeal.

The grandmother who always enjoyed acting as Lady Bountiful came to the rescue, so that the family was not left destitute. The fire necessitated another move, however, this time to a home at a considerable distance from the grandmother's. To John this

brought considerable sorrow, as it meant no further opportunities for him to pursue his interest in gardening.

The Murray family established themselves "in the vicinity of a nobleman's seat" where an academy of high standing was located. The head of this institution, an Episcopal clergyman, was an intimate friend of Mr. Murray and immediately became interested in John. He heard the boy recite chapters of the Bible from memory, and became impressed with his possibilities. He offered to take John into his own home, treat him as a well-beloved son, and give him all the advantages of the academy. The principal saw that the boy had an unusual memory and that all he needed was thorough discipline to equip him for higher education, perhaps at Trinity College. Such a rare opportunity would have been a great privilege for John, for it would have opened to him the very best in education and in social life. Mr. Murray, "trembling" at the evils that might befall his son if he were removed from the paternal home and placed among worldly boys, refused to take the offer. John, as a result, was even more solicitously watched and kept as closely confined at home as possible.

Since Mr. Murray so decisively refused this educational opportunity for his son, and since the boy needed to prepare in some way for the future, he was put into business. It is impossible to deduce from the "Life" any details as to what kind of venture this was, or how old he was at the time. All that we certainly know is that John was very young and that he heartily disliked the experience. Apparently the boy had a precocious interest in religion, and he wanted to give a great deal of time to its consideration, as well as to the normal activities of youngsters of his age.

The fact that he did not fit easily into a commer-

cial career does not prove that he could not have become a successful business man. The misfit was probably due at least partly to the fact that he had not yet arrived at the years when he could settle down to the routine of dull clerical work extending over long hours. Business offices were often on a ten or twelve-hour basis, especially for the lower ranks of clerks.

It was while living in Ireland that both John and his father came into intimate contact with the Methodist movement, an experience that was to mean great things to both. To the father it was to bring a deepening of his already intense religious emotions (if such a thing were possible). To the son, it opened new vistas which were to lead eventually to the great adventure of religious rebellion and the declaration of universal salvation.

John Wesley and some of his followers, with their unbounded missionary zeal, "invaded" the Emerald Isle early in their campaign for the revival of religion and morality. Wesley was at first charmed with the Irish character, finding the people responsive, thoughtful and "immeasurably loving." Exhorters found a better hearing in Dublin and Cork than they did in either England or America.

Soon, however, violent opposition began to show itself. Catholic priests led in the attack, sometimes driving their people like "a flock of sheep" away from the street meetings. Ridicule followed, and finally mob violence was resorted to. The established order of Protestantism joined the army of vilifiers, for they looked upon Methodists as intolerable. Men and women went up and down the streets, even carrying swords, shouting "Five pounds for a swaddler's head." (The term "swaddler" was used as a nickname and a word of ridicule.) Many people were bruised and seriously hurt, so many, in fact, that the matter was

brought before the courts. Charles Wesley and some of his coworkers had bills preferred against them as "persons of ill fame, vagabonds, and common disturbers of His Majesty's peace," and their deportation was urged. (1) But the Methodists were not turned aside from their purpose by persecution; in fact, it had the effect of strengthening their convictions and redoubling their efforts.

The Murrays became profoundly interested in the movement, and finally became active supporters. The father could not give up his Calvinistic inclinations sufficiently to believe in all the theological implications of the new system, but he joined the local society. John Murray says: "Mr. John Wesley was a great admirer of my father, and he distinguished him beyond any individual in the society, perseveringly urging him to become the leader of a class and to meet the society in the absence of their preachers: to all of which my father consented." (2) We can henceforth think of Mr. Murray as performing almost all the functions of an active clergyman, but refusing frequent requests actually to take orders.

John's mercurial nature and social disposition found the new movement just the thing he was longing for. He loved music, crowds, excitement, and the street meetings afforded plenty of all these. Mr. Wesley appointed the young John Murray leader of a class of forty boys which met twice a week. It was his duty to take attendance, lead in singing and in prayer. Then he examined each boy as to the effect of religion upon his life. This was no formal ecclesiastical rite performed merely by habit. It was a searching inquiry into the inmost lives of the boys, and it often led to eloquent "testimony."

John soon won a reputation as being an ardent and very sincere leader. He "exhorted" with fervor, and

soon people of all ages began to gather at these meetings to hear the young evangelist. The older folks congratulated the father on having a son who was manifestly "destined to become a burning and a shining light." Many spoke of him as being among the *elect*, but Methodists called this idea of election before repentance and faith "damnable doctrine." Both groups of theologians, however, agreed that this young leader showed extraordinary signs of God's special favor.

"New birth" was the term frequently given to this intensification of religious experience. John began to feel less sure that he was damned, and he felt stirrings of hope that he was to be among the chosen. This growing conviction lifted the cloud of "sin consciousness" from his young soul and he began to live "a heaven upon earth, beloved, caressed, and admired." A psychologist would say that now, for the first time, he had an opportunity to satisfy two of the four fundamental human wishes, namely, recognition and response. This experience awakened his latent resources and he began to feel the joy and power which come from freedom of self-expression.

Among the dangers which many young men fell into during such religious experiences were pride and self-righteousness. The Methodist meeting which came into being as an antithesis to the stilted services of the Church of England soon discovered essential weaknesses of its own. When children arose in public meeting and began to rehearse the effects of visitations of the Holy Spirit, they naturally fell into cant and self-praise. Mr. Murray recognized this danger and frequently warned his son not to become too puffed up with satisfaction, and not to allow the adulation of the crowd to make him think more highly of himself than he ought to think. John writes that at times he did come dangerously near feeling himself to have at-

tained perfection. Perhaps it was at this period that he first began to feel what later grew into a major conviction, namely, a strong sense of being sent by God to do a particular piece of work. This was not an uncommon view at the time, but few if any of his contemporaries felt it more powerfully than John Murray.

John was soon humbled. The class of boys began to be divided by rivalry and friction, and finally broke up. This, together with the constant admonitions of his father, kept the young evangelist from growing inordinately self-righteous.

During the Irish period of his youth, he describes his temperament as follows: "My life was as variable as the weather; sometimes on the mount, and sometimes in the valley, sometimes alive to all the fervor of devotion, and sometimes, alas! very lifeless; now rejoicing in hope and anon depressed by fear." (3) He further says: "I have often, after a night of suffering, risen with the dawn, and entering the churchyard have passed hours there, contemplating the happy state of those who were lodged in their narrow house, and ardently longing to be as they were." (4) He further says that this characteristic remained with him all his life, blessing him with moments of ecstasy and making him utterly wretched in periods of depression. In his exalted moods he felt the hand of God directly upon him. In his periods of depression he became the victim of all sorts of fears, doubts and feelings of persecution. His whole life was a continuous battle with emotional instability.

In due time John, and others of his age group, were warned to prepare themselves for joining the Episcopal Church. At this period the Methodists had not yet broken with the "mother" denomination, so all of them more or less automatically considered them-

selves members of the Church of England. There was, however, a great deal of tension between the two groups, and many clergymen of the established order looked upon the upstart evangelizers with indignation. This tension broke out between John and the minister of his parish. The young revivalist, imbued with the technique and theology of Wesley, heckled his pastor at the time of catechism, and insisted upon asking disturbing questions. The debate grew acrimonious, and finally the minister said: "You are an impertinent fellow, and if you thus proceed I shall order the clerk to put you out of the church." John was later summarily dismissed on the charge of profaning the altar by laughing; but he was not guilty of any such misdemeanor. He had been merely hiding his embarrassment behind his hat.

It so happened that the bishop was in town during this altercation, and John went to him with his troubles. This kindly and understanding gentleman talked the matter out in a sympathetic way, and the interview ended by the bishop laying his hands on John's head and praying over him, much to the embarrassment of the indignant pastor. This incident certainly argues for a great deal of ability and "spunk" on the part of so young a person, for at this period he was about sixteen years of age.

Of considerable importance to John's development was the fact that the family of Mr. and Mrs. Little moved into the neighborhood. Both parents of the Murray family became very close friends with them, and John struck up an intimate friendship with the youngest son. They became inseparable, sharing all their secrets, and both enjoying the same religious views.

In the Little home Murray first had access to a wide field of reading. Here he discovered Shake-

speare, Addison and other writers who opened up a new world for him. Mr. Murray, Senior, had good taste in reading and even allowed himself the sinful pleasure of reading "Tom Jones," but all that John was allowed to read at home was the Bible, Foxe's Book of Martyrs, and Saints' Everlasting Rest.


Another experience which shook the young man and which had a good deal to do with his development occurred in the home of the Littles.

John was not immune to the charm of the young women of his acquaintance—a weakness which he must have accounted as sinful *in extremis*. We quote at some length a passage from his autobiography, partly because it is an excellent example of the flowery and sentimental language in which he wrote:

"A young lady, a distant relation of Mrs. Little, was introduced as a visitor; she also was a Methodist, and of great piety. My young friend and myself were in the parlor when she entered, but soon withdrew, when we both agreed she was the most ordinary young woman we had ever beheld. . . . Yet this same young lady had not been more than three weeks under the same roof with us, before we both became violently in love with her. Many days however elapsed, before either became acquainted with the passion of the other; but I could never conceal anything long, especially from this my second self; and on a summer evening my friend mournfully inquired: 'What, my dear Murray, afflicts you? Why are you so sad?' 'I am ashamed of myself, I cannot tell you the cause of my distress.' 'Not tell me! Would you, can you, conceal anything from me?' 'No, my friend, you shall be made acquainted with my whole heart; I will have no reserves to you; but *you, you also* are unhappy, and I am ignorant of the cause!' 'Depend on it, I shall not hesitate to give you every mark of con-

fidence, when you shall set the example!" "Well, then, my brother, my friend, will you not wonder (and indeed I am myself astonished), when I assure you, that I have conceived for Miss Dupee the strongest and most tender passion!" He started, appeared confused, and for some moments we both continued silent. At length, taking my hand, he said: "I pity you from my soul, nor do I blame your attachment; for, however unattractive in person, who that hears Miss Dupee converse, who that has any knowledge of her mind, can avoid loving her, even as you love her; and to prove to you, how fully I am qualified to sympathize with you, let me frankly own, that I also love this charming woman!" " (5)

John was deeply distressed by this situation, fearing that it would completely disrupt their friendship, but the young man immediately put his fears to rest. By first making known his love, John had established priority rights, which his friend would eternally respect. This generosity deeply affected them both. John says: "I caught him to my bosom; I wept, I even sobbed as I held him to my heart." So Murray proceeded with his love affair.

A Calvinist in love is an object of curiosity if not of pity. He could neither rest nor eat. "For the first time, I began to tag rhymes: I have sat by the hour together upon an eminence, whence I could behold her habitation, poetizing, and sighing as if my heart would break." He finally made a desperate move, costing him much agony. He actually wrote the enchanting damsel a letter which he was bold enough to put into her own hand one evening as they were returning from church, beseeching her to read secretly this daring missive. "She took it, and, gypsy as she was, absolutely pressed my hand, which pressure almost suffocated me with transport."  It must

be remembered that she was a Methodist, which explains her shocking freedom.

The course of true love, however, was to be twisted and distorted by that nemesis of John's life—his father. The young woman immediately sent the letter to that august gentleman. A few evenings later, weary from want of sleep, trembling with fear, John was summoned into the paternal presence. The father was too ill to use physical instruments of punishment "but, like the Prince of Denmark, he could speak them—he could look them." Mr. Murray fumbled in his pockets, drew forth the letter, at which John nearly fell to the floor. Apparently the father was a master of the art of scorn, for "curling his nose, as if his olfactory nerve had been annoyed by something extremely offensive, he said: 'so, you poor, foolish child, you write love-letters, do you? You want a wife, do you? . . . Take it (the letter), thou love-sick swain, and let us hear how thou addresseth thy Dulcinea.' 'Go, thou idle boy, depart instantly out of my sight.'" (6) This betrayal of his first love cured John of any further immediate attempts in this direction.

Following this episode, the two young men turned for compensation to a gay social life, spending considerable money and occasionally straying from the straight and narrow path. Their pleasures were not at all vicious, in fact most people would call them remarkably innocent for young people who had just passed through such a disillusioning experience. Nevertheless, John felt many twinges of conscience because of these excursions into the world outside the somber walls of the church.

This gaiety, however, was of short duration, for the young son of the Little family was soon seized with a virulent fever, accompanied by delirium. In a few days he was dead. The experience prostrated John

and he was thrown into one of those periods of depression which occasionally visited him. There was an epidemic of disease in the community. The death of the other son of the Littles followed, and then John fell victim to its ravages. He was so delirious that he did not recognize his mother. His illness must have been extreme, for he said that, although he recognized his father, he was not afraid of him! A psychoanalyst might say that in this non-rational mood John was giving vent to a suppressed wish to meet the august parent on equal terms and to prove that he suffered from no sense of inferiority. Job's comforters gathered round his bedside and expressed their sympathies to the parents, uttering the most doleful fears, but he finally recovered perfect health.

Sorrow and suffering had by no means finished with the Murray family. Death pursued them. The father had contracted a pulmonary disease which had made him an invalid for nineteen years. He was now rapidly declining in health. As so often happens, illness softens bitterness and misunderstanding and draws members of a family together. John devoted himself to his father, still holding him in awe but coming much closer to him. Mr. Murray began to take much joy in John's religious activities in the community. Callers comforted Mr. Murray by telling him that he should consider himself unusually blessed with such a son, so devoted to carrying on the high ideals of the Christian life and so amply able to take his place in the family circle. The heart of the Calvinist began to grow tender as the end grew near. Every night there were touching scenes when all the members of the family were gathered for evening prayers. Mr. Murray had to be lifted from his bed, and he spoke with such a weak voice that he could hardly be heard. He was terribly emaciated, some bones actually pro-

truding through the skin. These last days must have produced in the mother and children a great emotional strain. The man was hardly beyond middle age; he had a large family, and his going would leave them bereft.

Finally, turning to John, the father said: "My son, the object of my soul's affection, let me, my dear, before I leave you, have the felicity of seeing and hearing you take upon you the character you will very speedily be called upon to sustain; let me hear you pray in the family before I depart." (7) John was at first overwhelmed. Gradually, however, he was able to voice his deepest emotions with an eloquence which deeply touched all. The father hugged him, blessed him, dismissed the children, and quietly passed away, on the night of Good Friday. With his last breath he whispered, "Blessed, perfectly bless—"

John's conscience was deeply stirred; he accused himself of ingratitude, sin and unfilial feelings. Again he was cast down into extreme depression.

These encounters with sickness and death gave an added gravity to John's character. He himself had come close to the valley of shadows; his best friend had suddenly passed away; and his father, after years of suffering, met a death which was hard to understand for so godly a man. John was now thrust into the position of the oldest male in the home. There devolved upon him the duty of bringing up the children, yet he himself was not twenty years old.

Among the problems which very soon rose to perplex the Murrays was the difficult one of finance. It seems that the second husband of his maternal grandmother had misappropriated much of his wife's fortune, and had sold a considerable amount of real estate without legal right. John discovered this fact and went to certain parties, who took the matter before

the courts. Murray was brought in as witness and finally begged the right to plead his own case, without benefit of counsel and without knowledge of law. He addressed the court for an hour and a half (no mean feat for a young man) and was completely victorious. He won back all the property for his family. They soon moved into their new home, which was all he could wish for. It was surrounded by an ample and beautiful garden, where he was able to indulge his love of flowers. He also secured other houses, and the rentals added much needed income for the family. Again it may be asked whether the rank and file of the Irish people were hospitable toward these foreign renters. If they were, it was a triumph of the personal quality of the family.

As soon as they were all comfortably secure in the new location, Mr. Little begged young Murray to come to his home and take the place of the sons who had died in the epidemic. Mr. Little looked upon the dearest friend of his son as one who might become his legitimate heir, and Mrs. Little concurred. These good people were growing old and they both craved and needed a young man in their family. It is also possible that they had in mind a husband for one of their two very attractive daughters, a possibility which did not escape John's mind.

The Littles had amassed a large fortune and were generous with it. They were willing, and indeed anxious, to give John a goodly share of it. Those who seek economic determinism in all major actions might well say that Murray left his own family because of financial gain. The indictment is probably true. Undoubtedly he was influenced by prospects for large means and the power that it would bring. So, after much tear-shedding and praying on Mrs. Murray's part, John took up his

abode with the Little family, occupying the room of his old friend.

This is the second time that John Murray was extended an invitation to become practically an adopted son of friends. It would certainly indicate an unusually attractive personality and social disposition on the part of the young man. (Apparently he discovered, long before Dale Carnegie, the art of winning friends and influencing people.)

While there were many delightful aspects to life in the Little home, all did not go well in the new relationship. Relatives were naturally jealous of the place this new "usurper" began to hold in the affection of the Littles. Heirs presumptive were suspicious of John and were active in scheming his downfall. They tried to malign his motives and to misrepresent his actions. This enmity, however, did not result in turning the household against John, but it did create something of a conflict in his mind. He became unhappy over the fact that he was disliked, and so began to go outside increasingly, especially following the Methodists in their journeys.

One day, perhaps a day that was to be important for Murray's future, an itinerant preacher thrust the young man into the pulpit and told him to preach. Without warning and with absolutely no preparation, he began to address the people and was soon warmed up to the task. The feeling of successfully orating before an audience gives a sense of power and achievement. Latent capacities unfold, and a glow of satisfaction spreads over an individual. Murray must have felt this, and perhaps at that moment he was moved toward the career that later led him to the ministry.

Religious activities had the full approbation of Mr. Little, but he began to feel that John was away

from the home too much. Like many fathers, he had a strong possessive sense and did not generously share his new-found son with the world. Quarrels frequently arose. Mr. Little would quite literally pour money into John's hands, and the young man would promise to be home more often; but when he was confined he was irked and unhappy. The rifts began to widen. Murray wanted independence. He began to think of wider horizons. Memories of England began to grow in his dreams.

One night he came home late to find only one of the daughters sitting up. In a moment of confidence he kissed the girl's hand; but at the same moment Mr. Little appeared, and with heated anger snatched his child away from such a bold and forward person. This was too much for John, so he finally made the dreaded decision: he would leave these scenes of young manhood, family and friends, and launch upon high adventure.

Mr. Little stormed and blustered, but filled John's hat to overflowing with gold, so much, indeed, that John says: "As I then believed, as much as would support me if I should reach the extreme age allotted to man." Inner conflict and doubt tore the young man's heart. He stumbled down the street and finally fainted on a neighbor's doorstep (not, however, until he had securely tied up the gold). Recovering, he went on to his mother's home and there revealed the plan.

Agonies and entreaties followed. Tremendous pressure was put upon him to give up these wild dreams, but the young man persisted. Something kept urging him on. Despite conscience pulling him toward the support of his mother, determination did not weaken. He says: "The way of a man is not in himself. I, at least, have experienced the truth of this

sacred testimony." Here, again, Murray has a sense of being in God's hand and of being used for some high purpose.

After a farewell which nearly prostrated everyone in the house, he went down the road to Cork. Here he went to the "mansion" of his paternal grandmother, who again rebuked him for his foolhardy adventure. He left in anger, and associated with the Methodists, doing some preaching and exhorting. On one of these occasions the grandmother heard him, became reconciled to him again, and opened her house to him. A brief period of comparative peace followed. His grandmother gave him of her generous hospitality.

The Methodists urged him to settle in Limerick, where they very much wanted him to take over one of their movements.

Here John Murray became personally acquainted with Whitefield, the powerful evangelist who was a Methodist yet held Calvinist views. This combination of beliefs was a delight to John, for, as he says, "election and perseverance were received by me as the doctrines of God." He followed Whitefield in his itinerant preaching, and often filled the same pulpit when the great revivalist was called away. This was certainly no small distinction for so young and undisciplined a preacher.

John Murray seemed destined for storm rather than peace. His Calvinism aroused opposition and *odium theologicum* was heaped upon him. Creeds mattered tremendously in those days, wherever religion was taken seriously. He knew that if he remained to take up a preacher's station he would be followed, spied upon, and made to suffer for his unpopular interpretation. So, waving adieu to the harbor of Cork, and to the green shores of Ireland, he set sail for England. He never again saw the Emerald Isle.

Chapter IV

Joy and Tragedy in England

THE journey from Cork to Bristol took three days, so that Murray had an opportunity to take stock of himself. His health was robust; he had an ample supply of money; he had no prospect for employment; there were no friends in England; and, finally, he had no particular plans. He was restless and wanted to escape the conflicts which had become intolerable. He was young, vigorous, and loved adventure—so here he was on the Irish Sea, heading for new experiences.

He landed at Pill, where he had experienced the thrilling escapade as a youngster, but found no one who remembered him; so next morning he walked to Bristol through the countryside which stirred his English soul with pride and joy. He was free! No family responsibilities, no church ties, no factory whistles to call him to work. To be alive and in England! What more could he want?

The problem of finding friends was never a difficult one for Murray. He liked company and was always sought after as a good companion, so almost immediately on arriving in Bristol he was discovered by fellow Methodists and urged to attend their meetings. He was "admired and caressed" and his warm nature expanded under the welcome. His fellow religionists pressed him to stay and preach for them, but he had his mind set on going to London. It is the old story of the fascination of the great city with its

excitement and variety. There was also a very specific reason why he wanted to move on, namely, he was interested in seeing and hearing more of Whitefield, who had a large tabernacle in London.

He walked the sixteen miles to Bath because he loved the exercise. His animal spirits were high and everything seemed to lift him to the crest of the wave of happiness. The song of the open road sang itself in his heart, and he might well have felt if he did not say:

“From this hour I ordain myself loos’d of limits and
imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
Listening to others, considering well what they say,
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of
the holds that would hold me.” (1)

Strangers haled him into their homes for lodging and meals. He had moved in the homes of the rich and privileged, but he was equally at ease with the farmer or proletarian. He conversed, prayed and sang hymns around the fireplaces of all kinds and conditions of men. Everywhere he reluctantly left, pushing on to his destination, “God directed” and with a sense of deep thanksgiving for his new freedom.

On the way he accidentally discovered that a Rev. Mr. Tucker whom he had admired in Ireland was in England, and the two had a most cordial reunion. Murray preached for him and they had a long talk on the theological problem involved in the relation of election to Wesley’s views. He says: “I observed to him, that I could not, with a good conscience, reprobate doctrines which, as I firmly believed, originated with God, nor advocate sentiments diametrically opposite to what I considered as truth. On this account I could not cordially unite with Mr. Wesley, or his preachers. Mr. Tucker saw the force of my ob-

jections; nay, he felt them too, for he was at that instant nearly in the same predicament with myself. *Yet we could not hit upon an expedient to continue in the connection, and preserve our integrity.*" (2)

This statement seems to be of importance in understanding Murray's character. Even at a time when he was "foot-loose and fancy-free," he was eager to preserve his intellectual integrity. He was deeply concerned with the truth, and once believing in a particular doctrine, he was not willing to shift with every wind or to compromise a fundamental position. He was ready to pay the price for orthodoxy or heresy, whichever the case might be. Theology to him was no idle speculation, but the very word of salvation or damnation. He was therefore always ready to stand foursquare for the truth as God gave him to see the truth.

He was urged by his friends the Tuckers to settle; but again pushed on, this time with more gold to jingle in his pockets. Finally he arrived in London, then a city of about 800,000 population. So excited was he that he let the stage drive off with his trunk and all his worldly belongings. He put up in a tavern and wandered about the town, fascinated by its humming activities and teeming life. How little he knew at the time that here he was to experience some of the greatest joys and deepest sorrows of his life.

When he returned from his wanderings, he suddenly remembered his trunk, and after diligently following the stage to its stop, found it intact! In a city infested with thieves that was certainly unusual good luck.

Hardly had a day gone by in his new home before he came into contact with the Methodists. These people seemed ubiquitous, and they seemed to know about John. Messages had apparently been sent by

grapevine telegraph about the Calvinistic aspects of his theology, so that the rift began to widen. He says: "The Methodists in London were afraid of me, and I was afraid of them; we therefore, as if by mutual consent, avoided each other."

Whitefield was not in town, so young Murray turned to a life of pleasure, and to his astonishment found it zestful. Why shouldn't he? He was vigorous, friendly, alive to the whole of life. Conviviality lured him and he soon found himself surrounded by a new coterie of friends whose chief interests were gaming, wine, theaters, dancing, week-end parties and general "good times." He became something of a "gentleman about town," a striking contrast to his usual restrained behavior. It is a tribute to his character that, no matter how boisterous his companions grew, he never indulged in any excesses which might be called immoral. While others drank liquor, he threw it under the table. It is one thing to keep a high level of living when sheltered at home or in the church. It is quite another to be able to resist temptation when surrounded on every side by *bon vivants*. Murray evinced his solid ethical foundation during this episode of his life by remaining essentially true to his Christian ideals.

Again the economic determinist might say that John Murray would have lived the rest of his days in this social whirl if his money hadn't suddenly and unexpectedly given out. No money—no entertainment. The one thing that Murray knew least about was finance. He supposed that he was supplied for life, but at the end of one year he had given his last halfpenny to a beggar. Friends began to forsake him, he was pressed for debts, and found himself in the most embarrassing situation.

Prodigal-son memories began to rise in his inner

life, and he yearned to return home to comfort and security, but shame kept him from a retreat. Then thoughts of the Tabernacle again rushed into his consciousness. (3) He would quietly slip into a back seat unrecognized, and again give himself to the contemplation of God. He went to the meeting and Whitefield was at his best. He invited "poor wandering souls" to have hope and to return to the ways of peace. The revival sermon struck home and roused the slumbering religious character of Murray, but left him in a state of isolation and depression. He says: "I carefully avoided my former companions, and my religious connections avoided me." Both groups were suspicious of his sincerity. His debts accumulated to large proportions; he dared not move from his lodgings because of what he owed, yet he dreaded any further sojourn under the roof of his host because he saw no way of paying rent. His despair deepened until thoughts of suicide began to rise into his distorted imagination. He could see no way out.

Some psychologists might go so far as to say that the man was a manic-depressive. It is true that some of the evidence seems to point in this direction. The extremes of emotional instability might argue for some kind of neurosis. On the other hand, the best test of a thoroughly sound and healthy personality is the reaction of people to him. Is he considered "queer"? Is he always "out of step" with the world? If so, there are good chances of abnormality in the case. On the other hand, if he is sought after, popular, and if people enjoy doing things for him, the chances are that he is normal. Murray's case seems to arise from the situation rather than from a radically maladjusted personality. It is also important in judging the man to take into account the effect of Calvinism and the religious revivals of the day. Conviction of

sin makes the most stable personalities depressed, and being a "lost soul" with the prospect of an everlasting abode in hell does not exactly lend itself to a calm and even temper.

As Murray was leaving the Tabernacle one day he was hailed by one of the regular attendants, who entered into conversation with him. Friendship deepened until the new acquaintance offered to advance enough to pay all John's debts, move him to new quarters and secure employment for him. This is typical of Murray's career. Always people were reaching out helping hands to him in his hour of trouble. The landlord, when approached on the matter of debt, refused to take a penny! Burdens and anxieties were gradually lifted from his shoulders, and he went earnestly to work as assistant to the inspector of a broadcloth manufactory to save enough to satisfy all his creditors.

Conditions in the textile industry in those days were appalling, especially in the large cities such as London. The trade was highly seasonal and irregular, many workers and masters being thrown out of employment. From 1723 to 1825 was a period when wages were depressed to a very low level. At the time when Murray was in this industry, the average pay for a common laborer was ten shillings, and a journeyman got no more than twelve to fourteen shillings. Whole families, including women and children, worked together and this resulted in riots against women. About twenty persons starved to death every month in London. Some are described as "dying and rotting by cold and famine, filth and vermin." (4) Strikes broke out, some workers smashing the machines. The workers were considered boisterous, disorderly, and addicted to cruel pranks. For instance, the rector of Bethnal Green complains: "Every Sunday morning,

during the time of divine service, hundreds of persons assemble in a field adjoining the churchyard where they fight dogs, hunt ducks, gamble, and enter into subscriptions to fee drovers for a bullock." (5) This reference to a bullock is explained by Samuel Wilderspin, a schoolmaster, who says: "It was a regular plan to go to Smithfields and steal an ox, and drive it into the neighborhood and make it go mad by putting peas in its ears and so on, and then when they had finished their sport, they would lead it into some field and leave it."

Any kind of business was distasteful to John Murray. He disliked commercialism in all its aspects and was never happy when cooped up in a counting-house. He stayed in his position, however, long enough to pay all his obligations. He went to the task of satisfying his creditors with a genuine zeal. He reduced his living expenses to an absolute minimum, denying himself every thing in the nature of luxury, and very soon he had the satisfaction of being able to look the whole world in the face again. His spirits revived and he was again happy.

Religion still claimed his attention. He rose at four in the morning for prayers and Bible reading, and spent his nights and Sundays at his beloved Tabernacle, hanging on every word of Whitefield's sermons.

Life for John was literally more than bread and meat: it was spirit and hope. He gave up all thought of family life and, as he says, would gladly have entered a monastery if there had been such an institution connected with Protestantism.

One thing about these services in the Tabernacle is of special interest: they were without narrow sectarian exclusiveness. Members of many denominations attended them, and Whitefield stood upon a

platform which for those times was remarkably broad and liberal. Murray imbibed some of this breadth and sympathy and when asked about his denomination he often replied, "independent Baptist, Methodist, Churchman. I hardly knew which of these I liked best, or loved most." He cultivated an inclusive spirit which sought truth rather than labels.

Many friends now urged Murray to take up the task of preaching again and to give his whole time to it. It is interesting to note that at this particular juncture he refused on conscientious grounds: "As the eternal well-being of the many was supposed to rest with the preacher, an error in judgment would consequently be fatal to his hearers; and, as I had now learned that I was not perfect in knowledge, I could not be assured I should not lead the people astray; in which tremendous event they would, to all eternity, be imprecating curses on my head." (6) Something of this humility would save other preachers from a rash dogmatism and a condemnatory spirit.

Murray formed a very close friendship with a young man named Neale, who attended religious meetings regularly and who was very earnest in his theological convictions. He and his sister lived in the home of their grandfather, a crotchety, domineering man who had a special aversion to everything and everybody connected with Whitefield. The Neale girl surreptitiously stole away from home to attend the meetings occasionally, and finally expressed the desire to meet her brother's friend, about whom she had heard so much. A meeting was promptly arranged.

Miss Neale attended a gathering where John spoke. Before John knew who she was he was smitten. She was beautiful, elegantly dressed, entrancing—the paragon of all virtues. "I returned home, but the beauteous image . . . accompanied me! I could

not for a moment exclude the lovely intruder from my imagination. I was alarmed; I wept, I prayed, but every effort was fruitless; the more I strove to forget her, the more she was remembered. I was impatient to behold her again, yet I most devoutly wished we had never met." (7)

Poor John was in the toils of love again, and as usual under adverse circumstances. Peace and dreams of a monastery fled forever. Eliza, for that was "her fascinating name," possessed him completely and he lived every waking moment conscious of her loveliness.

He could not call on her at her own home because of his associations with Whitefield. A mutual friend was found, however, and she acted as go-between, helping the two to meet and to exchange letters. John's love affairs always seemed to run into difficulties and entanglements. One of the Neale family betrayed John's confidence and told the grandfather that a clandestine love affair was going on between Eliza and a follower of Whitefield. The old gentleman stormed and raved. The young lady implored him to meet John and talk things over, but her pleadings were of no avail. The grandfather tore up his will, disinheriting her.

Emotional tensions over family relationships strained everyone. John's love grew more fervent and he pressed his suit for marriage more earnestly. Enemies of the union did everything in their power to prevent the two meeting or corresponding. Lies were told, even forgeries of letters purporting to come from Eliza were given into John's hands. Through months of anxiety and stress the young lovers kept faith in each other, testing their affection in the fires of adversity.

Sometimes Murray would stand in front of the Neale house at four o'clock in the morning, hoping for

a glimpse of the fair one. Sometimes the night watchman would eye him with suspicion, and once he was actually "taken up" by the officers. Think of the pious young Murray, full of prayers and yearning to do God's will, being hustled off to the police station because he was in love!

The matter was finally brought to a happy conclusion by Miss Neale's coming of age and taking matters into her own hands. She left her grandfather's home penniless, with all her worldly goods tied in a bundle. Her elder brother, John's bosom friend, took her to his home and there she settled down temporarily, determining not to go back to her former home.

Six months of impatient waiting followed, and finally the two were wedded. John stood at the pinnacle of bliss. After a short sojourn with Eliza's brother, a home was secured for the bride and groom and Murray says that they "enjoyed as much happiness as ever fell to the lot of humanity." Apparently John continued steadfast in business as well as earnest in prayer, for he maintained the new household on a basis of economic security, for at least a short time. His new-found devotion for his wife was sufficient to overcome his aversion for a business career.

While John Murray was going through the profound experience of love and marriage, a strange man named Relly was promulgating a still stranger doctrine in London. He was holding religious meetings and preaching to his people the astounding theory that God is love, and that therefore all men, even unbelievers, will finally become reconciled to Him. If Jesus died for *all*, must not all be saved? If the atonement is effective as a part of God's plan, how could it be defeated by the vast majority of mankind spending eternity in torment?

Relly had searched the Scriptures and, like so

many of the theologians of his time, could quote chapter and verse for his beliefs. The Bible was still the "word of God" in a literal sense, and was consequently used as a final proof for or against any argument. Relly used texts with telling effect, and he had gathered around him a large company of inquiring spirits who were anxious to hear this new interpretation of God's ultimate design for humanity.

Propaganda in those days had not reached the perfection of technique which we of the twentieth century are familiar with, but many of the essential elements were employed. "Name calling" devices were as effective then as now, so Relly and his group were subjected to a barrage of gossip and lies. The preacher was called a luxurious profligate, and his congregations were supposed to be made up of the same kind of folk. A vigorous campaign of hatred was directed against him until some good Calvinists, in the extremity of their ire, felt that God would be served by killing him. Relly was said to have "abused and deserted an amiable wife; and it was added that he retained in his house an abandoned woman." This is of all kinds of odium the worst—a form of defamation of character which has been successfully practiced through the centuries.

John Murray was caught up in this theological controversy. Having the reputation of being one of the ablest defenders of the faith, he was appointed to visit a young woman who was known to have adopted some of Relly's views. John consented to act as a rescuer of the lost soul, and, with a small group of God's elect, waited upon the stubborn young woman. She received the company with graciousness; but instead of being crushed with arguments by the orthodox she took the initiative and pressed her heretical point of view.

Murray was cornered. His argument rested on the doctrine that Jesus could save no one unless that person believed that Jesus was his Savior. The young heretic made Murray see that he himself was once an unbeliever but that he was not therefore lost. He did not know how to meet such astounding and willful heresy. "Here I was extremely embarrassed, and most devoutly wished myself out of her habitation. I sighed bitterly, expressed deep commiseration for those souls who had nothing but head-knowledge; drew out my watch, *discovered it was late*; and, recollecting an engagement, observed it was time to take leave. . . .

"I arose to depart; the company arose; she urged us to tarry. Her countenance seemed to wear a resemblance of the heaven which she contemplated. It was stamped by benignity; and, when we bade her adieu, she enriched us by her good wishes.

"I suspected that my religious brethren saw she had the advantage of me; and I *felt* that her remarks were indeed *unanswerable*. My pride was hurt, and I determined to ascertain the exact sentiments of my associates respecting this interview. 'Poor soul,' said I, 'she is far gone in error.' 'True,' said they, 'but she is, notwithstanding, a very sensible woman.' Ay, ay, thought I, they have assuredly discovered that she had proved too mighty for me. 'Yes,' said I, 'she has a great deal of *head-knowledge*; but yet she may be a lost, damned soul.' 'I hope not,' returned one of my friends; 'she is a very good young woman.' . . . From this period, I myself carefully avoided every Universalist, and most *cordially did I hate them*." (8)

Slowly, almost against their wills, the Murrays were convinced that they should go to one of Relly's meetings and see if this man were really as evil and dangerous as he had been depicted. It was with both fear and fascination that they finally made the fateful

decision. They feared the heresy, yet they were fascinated by the adventure into the unknown. When they found themselves actually at the church (an abandoned Quaker meeting-house) they discovered that Mr. Rely was a kind and reasonable person, very earnest and persuasive in his discourse. The congregation, instead of being made up of profligates and roués, was composed of average folk who were conscientiously seeking the truth. John makes an interesting comment on the audience. "They did not appear very religious, that is, they were not melancholy."

The Murrays were amazed. The sermon struck them with great force and they failed to see how it could be answered. Arguments were logical, well arranged and amply substantiated from Scripture. What to do? Here was a real dilemma. Should they embrace a new faith which was heretical in the extreme—a faith which was hated and persecuted? Should they join the persecutors and denounce the man and all his works? Or would it be wise to study and discuss the problem farther and let reason decide the issue? It was not easy to come to the conclusion that Universalism was something to be studied, for years later Murray wrote to Rely saying that at this period, "I was persuaded it would have been doing both God and man service to have killed you, and joyfully should I have held the clothes of any who had stoned you to death." (9)

It is a painful thing to go through an emotional revolution, yet John Murray and his wife faced just that. Were they to love what they had hated, and grow to hate what they had loved? Such a complete change could be accomplished only after the most conscientious searching and study.

He and his wife, after much praying for forgiveness, decided to look into Rely's pamphlet "Union,"

the fountain of all this blasphemy. When he put the tract into his pocket he says: "My mind became alarmed and perturbed. It was dangerous, it was tampering with poison, it was taking fire into my bosom; I had better throw it into the flames." (10) Both he and his wife, however, read the document and were amazed at the reasonableness of it. Mrs. Murray especially was more receptive to the idea than her husband, and was very soon won over to the belief that Universalism might be true.

Relly's ideas formed a strange doctrine. The whole human race had sinned through Adam, thereby justly incurring eternal damnation. Christ was the composite head of the race. He was truly guilty of the sins of all men, and could be, and actually was, punished for those sins. In his suffering all men paid the penalty due them for their transgressions and were thus delivered from the endless damnation they had incurred through Adam's sin. Through this "union" of Christ with the human race salvation was assured for all men. This Universalist graft on the Calvinistic tree was a fantastic piece of theology, but it did contain a great liberating force.

Some psychologists have claimed that religion is wishful thinking. Theological systems, according to their point of view, are not reports of reality but escapes from reality. In the case of John Murray, however, this does not seem to be true. He did not *want* to believe in the new idea of God or in the concept of ultimate salvation for all men. His wishes were in the direction of a Calvinistic Methodism. His conversion was in spite of, and not because of, his wishes. This seems to be the case in many periods of his life when a power greater than himself seems to be forcing him to take positions and undertake duties which were against his will.

Step by step Murray found himself giving way before the logic of the new theology. It was no overnight conversion, resulting from excitement and crowd pressure. It took years of the most painful struggle. He fought it and prayed for deliverance, but to no avail. He was finally conquered by this larger thought of God and human destiny. From bitter opposition, through reluctant admission, he finally arrived at happy and triumphant belief in the goodness of the All-mighty.

It was soon whispered in the congregation of the Tabernacle that John had been seen in Relly's meetings, and he was charged with believing in the new heresy. Whitefield and his people were very liberal for their day, but there were limits to liberalism. The congregation summoned Murray to a hearing at which he was accused of mingling with Rellyite blasphemers. He admitted believing in the new theology but denied any change in conduct or moral character. His prosecutors offered to take no action if he would promise to say nothing about his new convictions. This Murray refused to do. He would not be bound to silence for the sake of expediency, but insisted upon remaining forever free to champion truth as he saw it. Since he was so intransigent the congregation voted to drop him from their membership. For those days, when theological distinctions were considered absolute and basic, it was a logical act. The motion, however, was carried by only two votes, which showed that Murray had a strong hold on the affections of the people.

Many of their best friends, people who had known the Murrays both in the Tabernacle and in business, began to avoid them as if they had some communicable disease. John and his wife, however, had a new happiness which more than compensated for this new

trial. A son arrived, and the little family, living to itself, found a "heaven on earth." So the cup was full and ran over. Even the crotchety and wrathful grandfather of Mrs. Murray tried to effect a reconciliation, which, while short-lived, gave great satisfaction.

Their new-found religion was especially consoling. The genius of Universalism is confidence rather than fear, love rather than stern judgment. It was the natural outgrowth of the growing optimism of the new world which was slowly emerging out of the decadent period of feudalism. Political, economic and social forces were making for a re-emphasis upon a trustworthy universe and the essential dignity of man. It was an era when hope began to wax strong. The Murrays were happy in their newly-discovered Universalism. It gave them an optimistic outlook on life and lifted some of the sense of sin both from their own characters and from the world. A humanity ultimately set free from fear and sorrow sustained them and gave them a great spiritual resource, and it changed their attitudes to humanity.

We have noticed in a previous chapter that one of the dangers of Calvinism lies in its spiritual snobbishness. The doctrine of election makes men prideful and tends towards setting them apart in an aristocratic category of the saved in contrast to the great majority who are the damned. John Murray was not immune to this danger, for he says: "I remember the time . . . when I was converted from one state to another, from the wickedness of this world to the righteousness of this world; and when I attained to this latter character, I adored the Omnipotent Power, which had caught me as a brand out of the burning, I gave glory to God that I was not as other men, and I was right happy in my soul that God loved me better than he did other men. I have frequently quitted my tabernacle

devotions, with a heart overflowing with delight, and abundance of joy, and while pacing the streets of London, to my own dwelling, I have looked down with ineffable contempt, upon the first peers of the realm. I considered the multitude as I passed along, as more beneath me, than the meanest reptile, I was the chosen of God, the elect precious, while they were consigned from the foundation of the world to eternal perdition. How infinite the riches I possessed, how incalculable my elevation. Of the world of mankind I spake with strong abhorrence, and I believed it my duty to keep myself as much as possible from the contagion of their society." (11)

After his conversion, Murray's theology produced a radical change in his point of view. He was no longer proud and aloof, but humbled and thoroughly humanized. His new *Weltanschauung* brought him close to humanity, breaking down artificial barriers of social and moral class. Universalism uncovered the latent one-ness of mankind. A particularly interesting instance of this is contained in the following:

"It was at the tabernacle I was informed, that a poor, unhappy, widowed woman, sister to a man whom I had loved, was in most deplorable circumstances; she had been deceived by a villain; her kindred had been made acquainted with her situation, but their indignation was kindled against her; they would not see her; and her religious connections abandoned her, while she was suffering all the miseries of want, accompanied by her own agonizing reflections. I discovered her in a miserable room; no glass in the windows, no fire in the chimney; she was laying on something which had been a bed; a child, of a few days old in her bosom, but no nourishment for it; another child dead by her side, and a third apparently dying. Upon my entrance she covered her face with her

hands. 'I know you, sir; you are come to upbraid me; yes, I deserve it all; but by and by my measure will be full.' I burst into tears. I come to upbraid you? God forbid. No, poor sufferer; I am come a messenger from that God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. Be of good cheer, you have still a Father, who loves you with an everlasting love, and he has sent me to comfort you; he has seen your affliction, and he has bid me relieve you." (12)

Confidence and hope were to be soon tried in the depths of adversity. The son died at the end of his first year. His mother was prostrated by the shock and never recovered. She entered a long period of declining health, becoming emaciated and suffering intensely. John Murray was soon distrait. He was in daily fear of his wife's death and dreaded a separation from her even for a few hours. The doctor recommended moving to a suburb where living conditions would be more conducive to health. Consequently, he took on the added burden of a new home and also had to meet the heavy expenses of servants and nurses.

Sorrow for his son's death, extreme anxiety for his wife, and worry over finances made the man almost desperate. He told no one at first about his rapidly rising indebtedness. Soon, however, his creditors began to press him and, as a last resort, he wrote a note to William Neale, his wife's older brother, begging him to call. He responded immediately, but too late. Just before he arrived at the bedside Mrs. Murray died, struggling bravely for her husband's sake to be cheerful, and keeping to the last her belief in the final salvation of all souls.

The shuttle which wove the woof of Murray's life went swiftly from highest happiness to deepest despair. The prosperous young business man, the con-

tented husband and father, was now bankrupt and alone. He knew not where to turn or what to do. He was arrested for debt; his fair-weather friends refused aid. His mother, together with the brothers and sisters who were still living, came to live with him; but they were estranged by his new religious ideas. Finally he found himself in the bailiff's house, where he refused bed and food. Thoughts of suicide again took possession of him. His health became precarious, and the doctor feared for his eyesight.

He was filled with "mournful insensibility" and became indifferent as to whether he lived or died. He was threatened with removal to Newgate prison, where the conditions were notoriously wretched, but he did not care. His will to live had been weakened and he passively waited events. Only two things remained to comfort him: his thoughts of his wife, and his confidence in final salvation.

In the midst of this melancholia, the faithful brother William Neale appeared, and, despite John's protests, settled his debts and brought him home. The two brothers discussed the problem in all its aspects, and finally John consented to go to work in a new business venture. He made good as far as money was concerned, paid all his debts and faced a future of financial ease. He occupied a new home situated near London, which was extremely beautiful, with a pleasant garden; and he was well supplied with all physical necessities. He learned that physical vigor is resilient. Regularity of employment and compulsory association with others restored him to the world, but he had no heart in business and he did not recover buoyancy of spirit. Routine became dull and purposeless, and he longed to be free.

Mr. Relly saw him frequently and was a great help in this time of distress. He urged John to go

forth and preach the new faith, but John could not muster sufficient interest or courage. One evening, in the home of one of Mr. Relly's followers, he met a man from America. He was fascinated with stories about the new world, with its great resources and its freedom. Suddenly he determined to cross the sea and lose himself in the new land. His friends begged him not to go. His mother wept and implored, but he was resolute. "But shall I hear from you, my son?" "Do not, I entreat you, think of me as living; I go to bury myself in the wilds of America; no one shall hear from me, nor of me. I have done with the world." (13)

So saying and so believing, he engaged passage on the brig "Hand-in-Hand" and sailed away, a gloomy escapist.

Chapter V

America and Good Luck

THE future apostle of Universalism was at last upon the high seas. The ties which bound him to England and Ireland had been severed, and henceforth he was to cast his lot with the great new country in the west. The two-masted brig "Hand-in-Hand," upon which Murray shipped as supercargo on July 21, 1770, probably registered between one hundred and one hundred and fifty tons. It is not known what she carried for cargo, but without a doubt it consisted largely of silks, woolen cloth and manufactured articles which were in demand in the American colonies. With the exception of bumping into a sleeping whale one moonlight night, which gave the crew and passengers a slight scare, the sixty-day voyage across the Atlantic was rather uneventful. John broke the monotony of the long midsummer days by conversations with other passengers and the members of the crew...

On the whole, the prospects of life in America did not quicken Murray's pulse or banish the spirit of indifference which weighed upon his mind during the greater part of the voyage. He had brought some money with him, a considerable amount of clothing, many letters written by his wife, and a Bible. One of the most bitter experiences of his whole later life was concerned with that packet of precious letters.

We can only surmise as to any plans for the future which Murray might have had in mind as the

ship neared the shores of America. The Rev. Ezra Stiles, then president of Yale, in a letter written to the First Parish of Gloucester in 1785, made some interesting comments concerning Murray's ideas at the time of the voyage. This letter was based on conversations with Murray. "The plan he projected, he said, was to come here as a follower of Whitefield, and here to make himself known to him, and then request of Mr. Whitefield to put him into some employment at the Orphan House in Georgia; for, he said, he never had preached in England and had no thought of it here. Upon coming here his plan was broken up, as Whitefield died a few weeks before or after his arrival. I have been informed of some of his ludicrous and jocund conversation while on the passage, respecting what business he should follow here, intimating his readiness to go upon the stage, etc., etc., indicating an undetermined and unprincipled adventurer, ready indifferently to turn himself to any course." (1) In this letter and from notations in his diary, Dr. Stiles revealed his intense dislike of Universalists, so his statements could hardly be expected to be unprejudiced.

As the "Hand-in Hand" drew near the shores of America, Murray's mind remained calm and unruffled, neither elevated by hope nor depressed by fear. He expressed his feelings in this manner: "I was, as it were, between two worlds: one I had tried, and finding it contained more bitter than sweet I had turned from it in disgust; I advanced toward the other without high-raised expectations or fearful apprehensions." (2)

In September, 1770, a group of American merchants, in bitter protest against what they considered unfair treatment by their mother country, united their forces and signed a Non-Importation Agreement. According to this pact they would not import, nor would they allow others to import, any merchandise

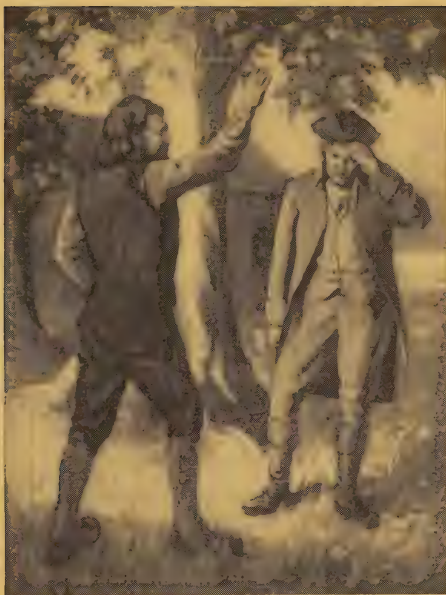
from England into the colonies. The ports of New York and Philadelphia were especially alert to prevent any such importations. The brig "Hand-in-Hand," carrying passengers and cargo, was warned at sea by a passing ship that this non-importation agreement was in force in New York. The captain altered his course for Philadelphia, where he was told the agreement was not then in force. The pilot taken on board outside of Philadelphia harbor advised the captain that just the opposite was the truth, the agreement was in force in Philadelphia but not in New York. The merchant, to set his mind at rest, determined to stop at the city and, if the pilot's report proved to be true, he would proceed at once to New York to unload his cargo.

In a conversation with Murray, the captain regretted the fact that he could not land him at his desired destination at once, and suggested that he go by land to New York; but the stage, which ran only at infrequent intervals, had already gone. It was decided that he should remain on the brig, which was to sail for New York the next morning. He was the only passenger, the others having disembarked at Philadelphia.

Murray was surprised at the size of the city. Not knowing exactly what to expect in this vast new country, he was dumfounded to find a city of forty thousand people. If he had looked at a map he would have seen a great checkerboard of squares laid out by William Penn formed by streets running north and south, east and west, between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers. Looking down from the State House tower he would have seen the "red city" of Philadelphia, with its fine colonial houses built almost entirely of brick. If Murray had secured letters of introduction from influential friends in London to

prominent citizens of Philadelphia, as he was urged to do, he would have found the locality already "infected" with the ideas of universal salvation. A visit to Christopher Marshall, the most persistent distributor of Universalist literature in America, would have revealed to John Murray's astonished gaze the most complete collection of books and pamphlets on that subject known to his day and generation. With the proper introductions Murray would have been welcomed to the Sower Print Shop at Germantown, which in 1753 published an edition of Paul Siegvolk's "Everlasting Gospel." Or he could have visited the bookshop of Thomas Dobson, a Unitarian-Universalist, and there found ready for sale the best known works on the Great Restoration, imported from Europe. (3) If Murray had secured the letters of introduction from his English friends he might have made valuable contacts with men of liberal ideas as soon as he landed in the colonies.

After spending the night on the "Hand-in-Hand" anchored in the Delaware River on the Philadelphia waterfront, the captain, with Murray on board, weighed anchor for New York. When they supposed themselves to be just outside New York harbor they ran into a dense fog. Hailing a sloop looming indistinctly in the mist, the captain asked for the distance to Sandy Hook. Understanding the answer to be seven miles instead of seventy, he kept his course and soon ran the vessel over a sandbar into Cranberry Inlet on the Jersey coast, which then connected Barnegat Bay with the ocean. The ship was prevented by anchors from being driven ashore, and a part of the cargo was soon removed to a sloop which had been engaged for the purpose. As many of the articles on board the sloop were too valuable to be entrusted to unknown and irresponsible persons, John Murray,



Thomas Potter hails John Murray
as a Preacher sent by God

being the supercargo, was requested to take charge of them. On the following morning the "Hand-in-Hand," aided by a high tide and favoring wind, again put to sea, but the wind changed again before the sloop could follow the larger vessel.

There being no provisions aboard, Murray went ashore in search of food, and after walking several miles through the woods he came upon a house where a young girl was cleaning fish. Here he was directed to the home of Thomas Potter, about half a mile beyond, as a place where without a doubt he could find supplies in abundance.

He was in America, and the country seemed lonely enough to satisfy his desire for quiet and peace. Surely this wilderness would furnish him the desired place where he could finish his days "in calm repose." The pine forests, interspersed here and there with oaks, extended as far as he could see. Beyond were meadows and swamps. A few rough-hewn houses and—did his eyes deceive him?—a trim-looking meetinghouse made out of sawed lumber, bordered a road, which was not much more than a trail.

Then John Murray met Thomas Potter. It seemed to him as if a venerable character had stepped out of the pages of the Old Testament and materialized before his astonished eyes. Although this man had a rough exterior he was more than kind and insisted on giving John a bountiful supply of fish for the sailors on the sloop. Murray departed, well pleased with his reception, after having promised to return and pass the night under the roof of his strange new friend.

After supper Murray retraced his steps to the Potter homestead and found a warm welcome, a bright fire in the fireplace, and an eager host ready for the conversation that indeed was to have tremendous results in the newcomer's life. "Come, my friend,"

said Potter, "I am glad you have returned. I have longed to see you. I have been expecting you for a long time!" John was dumfounded at hearing such words from an utter stranger, and his amazement was to increase as Potter unfolded the tale of his life.

He was born in the Jersey woods and it is not difficult to understand why his education was so meager. His father had not taught him to read or write. In 1764 Thomas Potter the elder bought land in what is now Berkeley Township, Ocean County, N. J., at the present site of the modern village of Bayville, several miles to the north of Good Luck. The Potters were descendants of Thomas Potter and his wife Ann, who came to East Jersey from Rhode Island at an early date. The Thomas Potter who met John Murray at Good Luck was of the fourth generation of the Potter family in New Jersey. When Thomas had reached man's estate he "went on coasting voyages from New Jersey to New York," and on one of these trips, in April, 1745, he was pressed on board an English man of war and "taken in Admiral Warren's ship to Cape Breton." When he reached Louisburg he ran away and traveled barefoot through the country, reaching New York in a half-naked condition, where friends supplied him with clothes and money.

Then he returned to his home in New Jersey, only to find that Elizabeth Hulet, to whom he had been engaged, was married to another man. Without wasting any tears or indulging in regrets, he promptly married her sister, Mary. Sometime after 1759 Thomas Potter erected the sawmill seen by John Murray in 1770. Having such a mill, it was possible for Potter to build both his substantial residence and the church which Murray passed soon after his landing at Good Luck. John Griffiths, a Quaker preacher, attending a

meeting in Egg Harbor in 1760, spoke of traveling with friends by the seaside to a place called Good Luck, where "we found a large meetinghouse, not quite finished, erected by one Tomas Potter, intended by him, it seems, for all preachers to use except Papists. We had a meeting in it, but notice not coming timely it was small and to little satisfaction." (4)

Though somewhat illiterate and deemed by his neighbors rather eccentric, Potter seems to have been a man of unusual intellect and of a kindly and reverent spirit. So long as he lived it was his custom to invite traveling preachers of all denominations to partake of his hospitality and preach in his meetinghouse. "I used to converse with them, and was fond of asking them questions. They pronounced me an odd mortal, declaring themselves at a loss what to make of me." He never concealed the fact that the prevailing theology, whatever sectarian form it might take, did not meet with his approval. In fact, he affirmed that from listening to the Bible passages which were read to him and from his own reflections he had constructed a theology rather different from any he had ever heard proclaimed from the pulpit of his church. He was sure that God would one day send a preacher to proclaim in a more effective way an interpretation of the Gospel like unto his own.

Potter's liberal ideas (liberal for the times) probably did not come from the Bible and his own meditations alone. In 1744 three pilgrims from the Dunkard community at Ephrata, Pa., made a journey across country to New Jersey and down through the region of Good Luck. They were believers in universal restoration. They preached and taught at different places on their journey, at last reaching their destination in a colony of Rogerine Baptists at Waretown, six miles to the south of Potter's home. These Bap-

tists were also believers in universal salvation. (5) Is it unreasonable to suppose that Potter might have been influenced in his thinking by both the pilgrims and the Rogerine colony of Baptists?

As the years came and went, and the long-expected herald of the new faith failed to appear, Potter's prophecy naturally became the subject of much ridicule. To his neighbor's taunting question, "Potter, where is your preacher?" the old man never failed to return the patient and confident reply, "He will by and by make his appearance." This remarkable faith was finally rewarded, for one morning late in September, 1770, the planter saw through the rising mist and fog a vessel apparently stranded in the shallow waters of Cranberry Inlet, some four or five miles away. Immediately a voice seemed to speak within him, saying, "There, in that vessel, cast away on yonder shore, is the preacher you have so long been expecting." "I heard the voice," said the old man simply, "and I believed the report."

As Murray listened to Potter's account of his life and the story of the long wait for the expected preacher, his amazement deepened.

"The wind will never change, sir," continued Potter, "until you have delivered to us in that meetinghouse a message from God." What could Murray do or say in the face of such confidence and determination? He tried to protest, for he was done with preaching (so he thought). The old life and the old world with its painful memories were closed chapters. All he wanted was some quiet place where he could earn his livelihood and spend the rest of his days in peace. But this strange, compelling, kindly man would accept no excuses, nor would he depart from the dictates of the voice which had spoken to him on the shore. So John went to bed, but not to sleep. Here

he was faced with a difficult situation, and what should he do and say in the face of Potter's persuasions? How well he knew that when the clergy in the new world realized the full implications of his teachings the floodgates of opposition and slander would open upon him, even as they did upon Rely in London. The compelling power of Potter's personality and simple faith had so gripped him that he saw in it all the guiding hand of his God. It almost seemed as if this message sounded in his heart: "I have laid hold of you, John Murray, body, mind, and soul, through this my servant, Thomas Potter, to preach the gospel of Everlasting Love; and you cannot escape your fate. Preach you must in this new world."

Murray wrestled for two days with his doubts and fears concerning his new mission. Saturday came, and the morning wore away into the late afternoon before he finally made up his mind. The wind had not changed and this he took as a direct sign from Providence. The barriers of doubt fell and he became thoroughly convinced of his divine mission. The overjoyed Potter instantly dispatched messengers to spread the news of the service on the morrow, that the church might be filled. At last his preacher had appeared. And so it came to pass that John Murray preached the gospel of Reconciliation in the rough-hewn church in the New Jersey wilderness, on Sunday, September 30, 1770.

What did he look like? How did he preach? How was his message received? The majority of Murray's pictures which have come down to us through the years do not give a very clear idea of his appearance. Apparently he was a short and rather stout man, very active, with broad and strongly marked features, his face a little upturned and of a resolute cast. His moods were plainly portrayed on his face as ripples

appear on the surface of a windswept pond, sometimes calm and shaded with melancholy, but usually rippling with humor. His ready utterance and unexpected sallies and his unique exposition of the Scriptures carried his audience with him through all the rapid combination of ideas or moods of feeling. Rhetoric, rather than clear logic, was his element. One of John Murray's English friends, the Rev. Robert Redding, of Falmouth, gave a very good description of his preaching:

"He delivered his discourses with great grace of oratory, but not without something theatrical in his manner. He had a very good choice of words, a great variety of expression, and adorned his sermons with quotations from flowery lines of the poets. He excited the passions and fixed the attention of his audience to such a degree that he could arouse and animate them at pleasure, or depress them with soft eloquence, even to tears. Yet with all his power and superior qualifications for the pulpit, he seemed at times to forget the plainest rules of grammar. He had no accurate mode of expressing his thoughts. Sometimes he became even puerile in his expressions as well as fanciful in his mode of treating scriptures. Yet with all this I never met with any one in the pulpit, who so very soon carried away my feelings."

Murray himself, writing to the same Robert Redding in 1795, tells of his preaching methods:

"I go to meeting more as a hearer than a speaker. I go resolved to hear what God will say unto me, and I am persuaded that I have not a hearer in my congregation, that receives more information or consolation from attending, than I do. When I first received a call to speak well of the Redeemer's name, I was taught to take no thought what I should say. I was assured it should be given me in the same hour what I

should say. I believed God. I might be more coldly correct, had I been in the habit of studying and writing my discourse, but I should not, in that case, have known so much of the pleasure of the life of faith. I have never yet been in the habit of writing down even my text. I frequently search for it after I reach the pulpit. I have often found it chosen for me by an unknown hand, and pinned upon the cushion." (6)

There Murray stood before his first American audience and, without notes or apparent effort, preached in a straightforward manner the message which burned in his heart. Just what the majority of that audience felt about the preacher and his message we may never know, but there was one who was supremely happy and he was Thomas Potter. God had answered his prayer. We do know, however, that at a later date, when many of those hearers in and around Good Luck fully realized the implications of Murray's ideas, they cooled somewhat in their enthusiasm. Potter, however, remained firm in his friendship and support. In the face of his neighbors' taunts concerning the preacher who should occupy the pulpit of his church, Potter could always point with pride to this hour of supreme happiness. His preacher had come, with the words of universal salvation upon his lips. With eager, receptive mind he had waited patiently, listening to one itinerant preacher after another, but the note of hope and faith had not been sounded. Today, however, this Englishman, who seemingly appeared on the shore as naturally as the mists rolled in from the Atlantic, had preached the blessed gospel of God's love, and not His sternness and fear. It should not be difficult for us to understand Potter's joy. He had lived under the shadow of the old theology, in that region where demons shrieked in the tempest, and Satan whispered in the

ear of the child at its mother's knee, luring it to predition. At the bedside of the dying, devils contended with angels for the passing soul. Much of the most heartening, God-honoring scriptures, from which John Murray preached, had been ignored or twisted out of their original meaning to meet the requirements of a perverted theology. Potter had emerged from all this, and on that significant Sabbath so long ago he was like one reborn.

The honored guest of the occasion, John Murray, was at a loss to comprehend it all. He left the happy party after the church service and in the quiet of his room prostrated himself before his God in prayer. The past few days flashed before him like a dream: the arrival on the Jersey coast, the meeting with the warm-hearted, friendly planter, Thomas Potter, and the strange interview. Then the period of wrestling with his doubts and fears, and finally the unmistakable evidence of the Divine will to which he bowed. Surely here was an experience to match that of the willful prophet Jonah recorded in the Old Testament. Jonah fled away from the face of his God and from his native country, and was rudely shaken out of his selfishness by a divine command to preach to the heathen in the great city of Nineveh. He did preach at last, and the portals of his heart were opened to take in, not one small nation only, but all mankind. So John Murray fled his country and sought personal peace and seclusion in America. Looking back over the past in the light of what had happened, he came to the conclusion that God had winnowed and shaken his soul and there was no escape. Preach he must. "The wind had not changed"—what more evidence was needed? Surely God had spoken. It was the firm assurance, gained at this time, that he was simply an instrument in the hand of God, that was to be

the source of Murray's power and preaching in the future. God had called him to do this piece of work; therefore God would take care of him. He not only voiced this faith but lived by it also. Again and again throughout the story of his life he expressed his faith in divine leadership and his great joy in obeying God's will though it led along slippery paths and through trying experiences. He stated frankly to an opponent in 1771, who challenged his authority, that he had the same authority for preaching which the Apostle Paul had possessed; "he received his mission by the will of God."

Murray rose from his knees refreshed and strengthened by his meditations. He barely had time to join the company assembled at Potter's house before his boatman arrived with the news that the wind was fair. That meant that the journey to New York could now be resumed. There stood Potter with tears streaming from his eyes, urging Murray to return as soon as possible. This strange man, who could neither read nor write, exerted a great influence over the impressionable Murray. This well-to-do planter who found satisfaction in the idea of universal salvation on the one hand, and cultivated his five-hundred-acre farm with slave labor on the other, was a curious reflection of the economic and religious conditions of the times. In a quaintly worded will, Potter made provision for his slaves: "I bequeath unto Joseph Bunniel my wife's niece my best fowling pease. My will is that my chattels, cows and horses be sold onley four cows such as my wife shal chuse and ten sheap. Them I bequeath to my wife as afore sd and allso I give to my wife my young negros and after my wife's desease to be set free; my two old negros Seaser and Jude to be set free at my deseace."

Of course John promised to return as soon as he

could get away from New York, for where else on the continent had he a home and such friends? The sloop moved slowly away from Good Luck. Murray entered the cabin, and, being physically detached from the scene of his remarkable adventure, he could reflect at leisure on the unusual events of the past few days. One thing stood out in clear outline. God had unmistakably called him to preach the good news of universal salvation here in America, and he needs must bow to that Will. In pondering over what course he should take in the future, this plan evolved in his mind. He would return from New York, for of course there would be no valid reason for lingering in that city, and be an assistant to his new friend in his fishing and agricultural pursuits. On every Sunday morning he would preach in the little church to a group of friends, and, of course, his patron Thomas Potter. He would work on the soil, live a simple life, and in that quiet place find the peace and contentment he sought. Still he was curious concerning what lay ahead. What was beyond those misty horizons? What sort of reception would he receive in New York?

Chapter VI

Universalist Backgrounds

JOHN MURRAY landed upon the Jersey shores in a troubled and tempestuous period of American history. If he fled away from the confusions and troubles in England in order to find peace and seclusion in America, he was doomed to disappointment. He expressed his longing in this naive manner after he had set foot in the new world: "Oh, that I had in this wilderness the lodging place of a poor wayfaring man, some cave, some grotto, some place where I might finish my days in calm repose." (1) This longing, however, was never fulfilled, for the rumblings of revolution could already be heard in the colonies. Into the crucible of war were to go the economic injustices, political grievances and religious autocracies to emerge in changed and refined forms. Indeed, whether it be in Europe or America, Murray was to find the currents of change and unrest running strong. Notable men in England were trying to overthrow the Tory government there. In France the slumbering forces which twenty-five years later were to result in the French Revolution were beginning to be felt.

Perhaps the most vigorous manifestation of these new liberating forces appeared in America. For one hundred and fifty years hardy and adventurous souls had been leaving Europe for America. Here, on account of pioneer conditions, independent spirits in religion and politics acquired a strength that would

not have been possible in more settled ways of living. There was always a frontier to which the adventurous could migrate. During the significant twenty years of revolution, 1770-1790, here in America (and they were very important years in Murray's life also) the bounds of human freedom were enlarged as never before. During those years the first great achievements of democracy appeared. The Declaration of Independence was the charter of political democracy. "If religious freedom and equality is America's chief contribution to the world's civilization, as has been conspicuously declared, and surely much could be said for this view—great honor belongs to the men of the Revolutionary period, for then it was, more than at any other time, that this principle, so distinctive of America and so invaluable to her prosperity and development, was put into actual practice." (2)

The political, economic and religious spheres of a great revolutionary struggle cannot possibly be separated. They act and react upon each other. The same battle for freedom and democracy which swept through the economic areas of colonial life also winnowed religious institutions and political systems. The upheaval was bound to influence and change theological conceptions and religious thinking. If it was unjust for England to do as she pleased with her subjects, was it just for the Creator to do as He pleased with His creatures? If it was unjust for a government to have a privileged class, was it just for the Almighty to have a select "inner circle"—the elect, so called—while millions of others, from no fault of their own, were allowed to perish? Out of this struggle were to come dissenting voices and groups demanding broader and more democratic interpretations of religion. The emotional religious fervor attendant upon the Great Awakening led by Jonathan

Edwards had died away. New forces were at work, and out of this turmoil and the deep religious needs of the people the seeds of liberalism began to germinate, and grew at last into the Universalist and Unitarian movements.

Such were the Revolutionary backgrounds against which John Murray's work was cast as he began his American ministry in 1770. He played an honorable and important role in this momentous struggle for freedom. Although he was English to the core and his love for the mother country was true and deep, yet without the slightest hesitation he threw in his lot with the colonists. He became a chaplain in General Washington's army and through the dark and trying years of the war he was continually raising funds to relieve the suffering and poverty-stricken. Of course his loyalty was doubted at times by his many powerful enemies. Ezra Stiles (then president of Yale University) made this interesting personal comment: "I consider him as a Romanist in disguise, endeavoring to excite confusion in our churches. But I can easily see he is a meteor of the night: he and his disciples will soon vanish. In his politics he has been at first an anti-American, then for us, and now against us, and then for reconciliation, etc., etc." (3)

At heart Murray was an American. He loved the country of his adoption and he was decidedly opposed to the British oppressions. In a letter to James Rely, his beloved English friend and spiritual father, he stated his position in regard to the political situation in these words: "But upon what subject shall I write? Not upon politics: we have nothing to do with politics. Let those whose kingdom is of this world, busy themselves about the things of this world: yet I cannot but acknowledge I have had a strong propensity to take a part in the general confusion. I have nothing

to do with any subjects save Jesus Christ and him crucified." (4)

Because of the pioneer conditions in the colonies and the growth of independent thought, the ideas of universal salvation germinated and came to flower in the minds of many people. In other words, John Murray's ideas were not entirely new in the America of 1770. Because of the difficulties of traveling and the obstacles in the way of the exchange of thought, he was not aware that many voices had been raised in defense of his central truth. He had the idea that he was indeed a voice crying in the wilderness, and he was justified in this belief because of the fierce opposition encountered on every hand. The established churches, when once they detected his heresy, slammed their doors in his face. He complained bitterly of this treatment in a letter to James Rely: "When I dare to tell the people this incontrovertible gospel truth, and attempt to prove it by the Scriptures, which either they have not heard or, hearing, have not understood, the indignation which is excited against me is astonishing. No opportunity, either in public or in private, is neglected of loading me with every epithet which can render both me and my testimony odious to their disciples; the consequence of which is that I am frequently insulted as I pass through the streets, and I will confess to you that I am more hurt by this contumely than I have words to express." (5)

It is indeed a difficult and fruitless task to determine who first taught the Universalist doctrines in America. Many names have been put forward, but no one really knows. These "heretics" were found in many churches. They were cordially despised and their way made difficult. There were so many that only a few can be mentioned here. Being unorganized and a minority in their local churches it was

hard for them to make much headway against the ramparts of Calvinism. These different streams of thought, each carrying the peculiar theological flavor of its particular locality, all merged in the common stream of universal salvation. They differed on certain theological points, but united on the common platform of salvation for all men. Murray, for instance, incorporated his precious truth in the bizarre theology of James Rely, and others differed, much to his sorrow (for he was sensitive on this point), from his point of view.

For the sake of convenience it might be well to consider these "native" Universalists from the viewpoint of their geographical location. Pennsylvania made distinctive contributions to Universalism many years before John Murray landed at Good Luck. The Rev. Conrad Beissel, born in Germantown in 1690, was openly advocating universal restoration in Ephrata in 1745. Although expressed in figurative language the idea was present: "Now must divine service last forever, and the blood of Redemption, without ceasing, receive a priestly administration for the sin of the other tribes of Israel so that at last all will serve the Lord and honor him in his temple." (6)

Stranger than fiction and more colorful than a movie thriller was the life and work of Dr. George de Benneville. The story of his experiences reads like an adventure novel. A hairbreadth escape from the executioner's axe in France, for the crime of preaching Universalism, and a most unusual emotional experience in Holland are only the high points in a life crammed with activity both in the fields of medicine and preaching. In his astonishing little volume entitled "A True and Remarkable Account of the Life and Trance of Dr. George de Benneville, late of Germantown, Pa., including what he heard and saw,

During a Trance of Forty-Two Hours, Both in the Regions of Happiness and Misery," (7) he records a strange experience. He fell into a wasting disorder and felt himself dying by degrees, and was actually regarded as dead by his friends for a period of forty-two hours. He saw them prepare his body for burial and inclose it in a coffin. During this interval, in spirit he visited the abode of the dead, both the wicked and the good. He saw in those visions the final restoration of all souls and heard the triumphant chorus of the redeemed.

De Benneville was born in London and came to America in 1741, preaching continually in and around Oley, Pa., until 1775, and subsequently in Germantown and Milestone until his death in 1793. His time was evenly divided between the practice of medicine and in preaching, for which he never accepted compensation. There can be but little doubt that the influence of Dr. De Benneville prepared the way for the establishment of Universalism in Philadelphia and Reading. He was instrumental in publishing an English edition of Seigvolk's "Everlasting Gospel," a German Universalist work which was introduced into this country by Chrisopher Sower, De Benneville's friend and printer. This remarkable Pennsylvania doctor-preacher was healing the bodies of men and at the same time preaching universal salvation to receptive minds years before Murray landed in America.

There is a region roughly including the mid-northern section of Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire and Vermont which, for one reason or another, has furnished a great many important leaders to the Universalist cause. In fact, within a radius of fifty miles from the town of Winchester, N. H. (where the Universalist Profession of Faith

of 1803 was adopted), more Universalist ministers were sent out into the world to proclaim the ultimate salvation of all souls than from any other area of the same dimensions to be found in this or any other country.

The majority of these pioneers came out of the Baptist churches. Perhaps the freedom of thought in that body encouraged the bolder souls, after a painstaking study of the Bible, to follow out the implications of their belief to the broader foundations of the salvation of all men.

One of these early Universalists contemporary with Murray was Caleb Rich. He was born in Sutton, Mass., in August, 1750. Armed with a thorough knowledge of the Bible, he entered with zeal into the fierce discussions going on at the time between the Baptists and members of the "Standing Order," or the Congregationalists. His house was the arena of hot debates and finally the family split, the father and son Caleb joining the "Baptist persuasion" and the mother remaining a Congregationalist. Those hardy pioneers had small opportunity for intellectual culture. Common schools were of the most primitive type. Newspapers and periodicals were rarely seen. Amusements were forbidden as sinful; and about the only food and entertainment for the mind were found in the Bible and in religious services and discussions.

At the age of twenty-one Caleb Rich left his father's home to work on a farm in Warwick, Mass., and there he continued to worry about the condition of his soul and eternal salvation, meanwhile constantly studying the Bible. At last he thought his way through to the Universalist position. When, in the joy of this new-found light, he related his experience to his fellow Baptists, they did not seem to take kindly to his new ideas. So to stop the spread of this doc-

trine the Baptist elders held a heresy trial. The three men on trial, Caleb Rich, his brother Nathaniel and Joseph Godell, were severely censured and told to leave the society, and the people were warned against them. They were "strictly forbidden to talk, exhort or pray with believers." So Caleb and his two friends called a meeting in legal form to organize a new religious society in order to save themselves from being taxed to support a doctrine which they did not believe. This was in the early part of 1773, and seems to be the first approximation to the organization of a society in the United States of believers in universal salvation. The church grew and so did the influence of Caleb Rich. He was a modest, retiring man, and his best work was not done in the pulpit but in his lectures on Biblical subjects and in explaining the passages in the light of his new-found faith. He was called upon to expound the Scriptures in neighboring towns—Winchester, Richmond, Jaffrey, Swansey, Royalton and other places. Indeed, the influence of his quiet, kindly personality and his lucid interpretations of the Scripture spread far and wide.

One humorous incident of his tenacity and skill in argument might be cited. He fell in love with a young lady, a member of a very strict Baptist family. The parents frowned on the idea of marriage, for had he not been cast out of the church? The girl, knowing her lover's ability, pleaded with her parents to give Caleb a hearing and a chance to defend his position. Young Caleb "came, saw, and conquered." From the position of defense he soon took the offense and converted not only the father and mother but the whole family to the truth of his doctrine. Needless to say, he married the girl. Not every young man in love can overcome such formidable obstacles!

It is a long and brilliant list of Universalist lead-

ers who have come down from the "Hill country" as living witnesses to the influence of this strong, kindly, liberal pioneer. Such men as William Farewell, Thomas Barns, the Ballous, the Streeters, the Skinners, Babbitt, Young, Flagg, Stacy, Loveland, Willis, Williamson, Sawyer—all great names in Universalist history—and many others bore the impress of "Father" Rich's personality. Caleb Rich differed somewhat from his contemporary, John Murray, but his work, together with the toil of many others, unknown and unsung, represents a stream of "native" Universalism which made a distinctive and lasting contribution to the liberal cause.

Another contemporary of John Murray who did pioneer work in Worcester County, Mass., was Adams Streeter. In fact, there is scarcely a locality where there were more Universalists prior to 1780 than in the towns of Sutton, Douglas and Charlton. Streeter began his career as a Baptist preacher and became a Universalist about 1778. He was a man of strong mind, possessing great natural eloquence, and a pleasing freedom in public preaching. His was the "debt and credit" theory of redemption. For instance, in one of his many sermons he used the text Genesis 4 : 7, "If thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door," and he explained it in this manner: "Sin is placed to the account of Christ, who says of himself, 'I am the door.' " Like so many of these early Universalist pioneers Streeter rode a circuit of towns, preaching to small groups gathered in the homes of his friends and acquaintances. The influence of Adams Streeter and men like him, about whom we have so little data, was not small. They were not learned men, or gifted in the arts of oratory, but they did possess a proselytizing zeal for the faith which meant so much to them.

Hosea Ballou, 2d, makes the significant statement

that "of all the early Universalist ministers by far the most eminent for theological learning and intellectual power, combined with still greater moral and religious excellence, was Elhanan Winchester," (8) another contemporary of John Murray. Winchester was born in Brookline, Mass., Sept. 30, 1751. His father owned a small farm on which he contrived to support a very numerous family by the double employment of agriculture and shoemaking, to which he occasionally added that of preaching. Being a great admirer of Whitefield, he united with a small company of "New Lights" in his neighborhood. After having been successively a New Light, a Baptist and a Universalist, he died among the Shakers at Harvard, Mass., in 1810.

Elhanan was a precocious boy, apparently much more interested in reading a book than in indulging in the rough games of his friends. At five he read understandingly, and because of a marvelous memory he retained everything he read. It so happened that he was once corrected by his father for gazing around the church during a religious service. The stern parent had to relent, however, when he gave the text and repeated word for word the greater part of the sermon. "And now, father," continued the boy, "if you will not be offended, I will tell you the number of persons present this morning and the number of beams, posts, braces, rafters, and panes of glass there are in the meetinghouse; I counted them all, and remembered the text too." (9)

Winchester commenced preaching in Baptist churches at an early age. To the very unusual natural powers of mind he added the embellishments of the historian, the philosopher, a general knowledge of science, and the traveler. About the year 1778 he happened to read Seigvolk's "Everlasting Gospel" and later Stonehouse's "Treatise on Universal Resti-

tution," and the leaven of this heresy began to work until it brought him into complete assurance of the restoration of all souls. The wanderlust was always in his blood. Up and down the Atlantic seaboard, across to England, back to America, this remarkably brilliant man was continually on the march, preaching, exhorting and writing.

His humble estimation of his own ability time and time again deceived an unwary and arrogant opponent, who thought to make quick work of his arguments. But the "partialist" soon knew that he was up against a formidable opponent. In spite of his travels and ceaseless preaching, Winchester found time to write and publish many books, lectures and sermons which were circulated widely through the colonies and in England as well. In fact, the list fills up half a column in *The Universalist Magazine* of June 4, 1825.

Sebastian Streeter, an eminent Universalist who preached in Boston for many years, speaking at Winchester's grave in Hartford, Conn., in 1848, said this: "His (Winchester's) 'Dialogues' was the first Universalist book, except the Bible, that I ever read. It has been read by thousands. It has done more than any other single book for the diffusion of our faith, and its mission is not ended." (10) Winchester contributed a great deal to the liberating movements of the late eighteenth century, and as a result of his extensive travels and published works he was well known in England and in parts of France. His sermon, "The Three Woe-Trumpets," delivered in London in 1793 before Parliament, was translated into the Dutch language.

A few of the pioneers of the more liberal ideas in religion have been mentioned, but the list does not include the rebels in the Congregational and Episcopal

churches who were Universalists in their writing and preaching. The fresh creative currents of revolutionary thought found expression in the lives of De Benneville, Rich, Streeter, Winchester, John Murray, and others too numerous to mention. These men were the voices of ideas struggling to be born. They were sensitized to catch a glimpse of a new and better world. What John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson did to change and democratize the political and economic areas of colonial life, these early liberal leaders accomplished in the field of religion. The same pressure of events was upon them all.

In reality there can be no "Father of Universalism." No one man was the "first" preacher or the "first" writer. It was a co-operative affair, each one contributing his particular belief and action to the colorful stream of liberal thought. Some worked with meager tools in the backwoods and frontier districts. Others, like John Murray and Winchester, played more dramatic roles in establishing societies, building churches and cementing scattered groups into some semblance of organization and unity. Thomas Jefferson clearly revealed the goal toward which those early liberals were moving and for which John Murray battled in Gloucester: "Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities." (11)

Chapter VII

Man on Horseback

DURING the first four years after his arrival in the autumn of 1770, Murray made his home with his friend and benefactor, Thomas Potter. The Apostle of Universalism, convinced of divine sanction, worked out a plan whereby he would preach the gospel and labor on the land with Potter. He did not need any new clothing, for he brought an abundance with him from England. As for salary, he established a rule which he followed strictly throughout his itinerant wanderings. As he expressed it in his dramatic manner: "I am persuaded that I shall not live long in this world; I shall want but little here, nor want that little long! I reject, then, with my whole soul, I reject the liberal offer you (Potter) so recently made me, of a fixed stipend. I will have no salary, I will have no collections, I will preach the gospel freely." (1)

The outlines of the future seemed clear to Murray. Little did he realize at the time what lay in store for him, or how many miles he would travel on horseback, in stagecoaches, by coastwise ships and on foot, to spread the gospel of universal salvation. In his wildest imaginings he could not visualize himself journeying up and down the Atlantic seaboard, preaching his doctrines from Maryland to New Hampshire, in numberless towns and in such cities as Philadelphia, New York, Norwich, New London, Newport, Providence, Boston, Newburyport, and Portsmouth.

The life of the itinerant preacher in the new world

was far from easy. He might possess great zeal and faith in his cause, and earnestly desire the salvation of his fellow men, but there were many material obstacles to overcome. Travel was difficult, roads were bad and accommodations along the way were primitive. Probably the swiftest method of travel then (1770-1780) was on horseback. The Apostle of Universalism spent numberless hours going from place to place in this fashion or riding in stagecoaches. "The roads on the whole were bad. Perhaps one of the worst on the main line north and south was the stretch between Maryland and the Susquehanna Ferry, in which the ruts were normally so deep that the passengers in the stagecoach, at the cry of the driver, had to go from one side to the other, as if ballasting a sailboat, to keep the coach upright. The stagecoaches were hardly more than big boxes with no steps nor glass in the windows or doors. In bad weather the openings were closed with leather curtains. Their progress was slow, four miles an hour between Bangor, Maine, and Baltimore; and not seldom they were upset or their axles were broken by the bad roads. In winter the crossing of such rivers as the Hudson or the Susquehanna in small boats amid the waves and tossing ice was sometimes fatal. The trip between New York and Philadelphia, partly by boat, took a day and a half." (2) The way of the traveler was far from easy.

The majority of the people with whom Murray came in contact were farmers. Generally speaking, they were independent and hardy folk who depended on their own efforts for a livelihood. They produced or made nearly everything necessary for household use, including their clothing. "Clothing" meant a complicated process in the 1770's. From the wool that had been grown on the backs of sheep and carded on

the home farm, yarn was spun, and dyed with dyes from the barks, roots, blossoms and leaves of native herbs before it was woven into cloth on the loom. Homes were heated by fireplaces, and to keep the fires brightly burning logs must be cut, hauled, sawed and split. Light came from home-made candles, and these were used sparingly because they required much saving of grease and hours of labor. Food was cooked before the embers of the open fireplaces or in brick ovens, and most of it was home-grown.

This was the sort of world in which John Murray lived and traveled. His tremendous energy, his limitless faith, his grounding in scripture and his skill in debate are almost beyond comprehension. All of these things, combined with an overflowing love for people and a saving sense of humor, made Murray a commanding and unique leader in an age of revolution and change.

John's plans for living quietly with his benefactor at Good Luck and working on the land, perhaps making short preaching trips to near-by towns, were doomed to disappointment. The fame of his preaching began to spread beyond New Jersey. His direct, emotional style and his gospel of love and hope drew the attention of people in more distant cities and towns. Murray began his travels, probably with no other idea in mind than that of obeying the divine command to preach. This was a new country. He did not know much about its religion or its people, therefore it was necessary for him to devise a plan of action, and his method is rather interesting. He preached for nearly four years before the implications of his heresy, universal salvation, were uncovered. Here and there he was suspected by certain of the orthodox ministers with whom he came in contact, but generally speaking he was considered to be another preacher of the White-

field type. He did employ the great evangelist's style of delivery and emotional approach.

Murray's technique in presenting his ideas to his different audiences was probably devised as a method of self-defense, and it was exasperating to his enemies. Instead of coming out openly and declaring that he believed in universal salvation he always clothed his ideas (at least for the first four years) in scriptural language. In vain did those who suspected his orthodoxy try to pin him down. He always proved his points by the skillful use of scripture, and left it to his hearers to draw their own conclusions. "One capital difficulty which has encompassed me in my progress through this younger world has been the extreme reluctance of inquirers to receive their answers in scriptural language. Standing alone I have sought to wrap myself, or rather to entrench myself, in the sacred testimony of my God; and for this I have been accused of prevarication, equivocation and what not, merely because I have not generally chosen to garb my sentiments in my own words. Thus I was contented with proclaiming the truth as it is in Jesus in scriptural language, only leaving to my hearers deductions, comments and applications." (3) By using this method he laid himself open to misunderstanding on the one hand, but on the other hand he was clothing his own ideas with an authority recognized and respected by all. He dwelt with emphasis on those points of doctrine with which his Calvinistic hearers would sympathize, and left his audience to draw their own conclusions.

In his sermons and public addresses Murray possessed one weakness which he had to guard against, for it created bitter misunderstandings. This was his habit of using sarcasm and a biting wit. Edward Turner, one of the ablest of the early nine-

teenth century Universalist preachers, quoted Murray as saying: "My brother, if you possess wit and satire, never cultivate but chastise them, they will not produce you any sincere friends. They will make you many enemies; it is no way to catch birds by casting stones at them." (4)

Between September, 1770, and September, 1773, Murray was an itinerant in a wide and constantly enlarging field. At first the preaching services in the little church at Good Luck attracted crowds from a radius of twenty miles. Under the pressure of the many invitations that came to him, Murray visited New York, where he was warmly welcomed. Such was the enthusiasm that his admirers wanted to build a church and have him remain as their pastor. They did not realize the implications of his teachings. He refused their kind invitation because he had promised his aged benefactor that he would return to Good Luck.

His next experience in Philadelphia did not end on such a happy note. In response to many invitations he visited the City of Brotherly Love, where he was warmly welcomed by a group of friends and invited by the Baptist minister to visit his house and preach in his church. His heresy was not suspected until the minister, in a private conversation with Murray, began to doubt his orthodoxy. Immediately he forbade him the use of his church, and furthermore warned all the other congregations and their ministers. All doors were then closed to him. Finally his friends secured a room called Bachelor's Hall. "This was once a celebrated place of gluttony and good living, situated in Kensington on the Main river street. It was a square building of considerable beauty, with pilasters, and was burnt before the Revolution. It was built for a few city gentlemen; tea parties were

made there frequently for the ladies of their acquaintance, and once it was lent to the use of Murray, the Universalist Preacher, keeping then the doctrine cannon-shot distance from the city." (5)

Murray was involved in endless controversies. One rather humorous incident arose out of a conversation with a Baptist minister in Philadelphia. The minister had told Murray that he walked nine miles every Sunday to preach. "How many in your congregation?" asked Murray. "About one hundred," was the answer. "How many of the hundred do you suppose are elected to everlasting life?" continued Murray. "I cannot tell." "Fifty do you think?" "Oh no, nor twenty." "Ten, perhaps?" "There may be ten." "Can those lost do anything which will help their situation?" "They might as well try to pull the stars from heaven." "Can your preaching help them?" "Certainly not. Every sermon they hear will sink them deeper in damnation." "And so," concluded Murray sarcastically, "you walk nine miles every Sunday to sink ninety persons out of a hundred into never-ending misery?" (6)

Within a year's time in the new world Murray had gained fame and notoriety. At least to the orthodox ministers who suspected his brand of theology he was certainly a heretic. Although written at a later date than the period covered by Murray's itinerant preaching this notation from the Rev. William Bentley's diary reveals the attitude of many orthodox clergymen. First he cites reasons against admitting Murray into the public desk: "He is a stranger, without credentials or testimonials of any sort. He has been educated in a quite different profession from that of a public teacher. He is a vagrant, having no regular abode in any place, any ordination or appointment to any charge whatsoever. He has inveighed bitterly

against the whole order of ministers and has not properly confuted their opinions. He is incapable of judging of points in question by the deficiency of his education." (7) This was a rather mild criticism in comparison with a broadside in a letter written from America by Dr. James Manning to his friend the Rev. Benjamin Walker of London, in 1783. "Language would fail to paint in proper colors the horrors of these days. About this time one John Murray, alias Murphy, a fugitive from justice in Great Britain, with great address undertook to propagate the doctrine of universal salvation, as held by a Mr. Relly, in his book on Union, of which Mr. Murray was a mere retailer. In this work he was too successful in the towns and counties through New England. The avidity with which the error was imbibed greatly contributed to the decline of the morals of the people, and to unsettle the minds of professors." (8) Evidently Murray was successful in his preaching.

In the autumn of 1773 he again left the hospitable home of Thomas Potter to journey as far as Newport, R. I. In New York he went through one of those bitter and painful experiences which gave his enemies much needed ammunition. His moral integrity was assailed. It so happened that before he left Cork, Ireland, Murray had been entertained in the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Trinbath at the same time that Whitefield was there. Shortly after this Mrs. Trinbath ran away from home with another man and came to America. On his route to Newport Murray learned that the lady was living in New York in straitened circumstances. He felt that if he could see her, he could persuade her to return to Ireland to her widowed mother and children, her husband having died in the meantime. Not knowing of her husband's death, Mrs. Trinbath, thinking that this man who desired to see

her was her husband, refused to see Murray. This was a sweet morsel for John's enemies. Soon the rumor was circulated that this pious preacher was a ne'er-do-well wedded to a woman of uncertain character. With great difficulty Murray obtained an interview, in which the lady assured listeners that this man was not her husband; but the damage was done and the rumor continued to be circulated for the express purpose of discrediting Murray and his message.

The Apostle of Universalism pressed on into Connecticut, preaching in the towns of Milford, Guilford, Norwich and New London. All along the way people were eager to hear him. Even if they did not detect his heresy at once they were inspired by his powerful preaching. They questioned, debated, argued, and discussed the theological points with him. All of these experiences revealed the hunger, restlessness and confusion in the minds of many people just before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. There seems to have risen up simultaneously in different parts of the country a sense of unsatisfied wants, a longing for something more than the old systems of religion could give. Murray, to a certain extent, seemed to supply that want for many, but to others, especially the clergy, he was simply an ignorant, emotional ranter who stirred up the people and made them dissatisfied with the prevailing church doctrines.

At Norwich, Conn., Murray received a very cordial welcome. The number of people who desired to hear him preach was so great that the largest meeting-house in the town was thrown open. Miss Caulkins, in her "History of Norwich," says that the doctrine of universal salvation was first introduced into Norwich by Mr. John Murray, the English Universalist, or "Great Promulgator," as he was sometimes called. "He was first invited to preach in Norwich by Mr.

Samuel Post, who, having been accidentally present when he delivered an address at Guilford, was charmed with his persuasive oratory." (9)

After preaching in Norwich Murray continued his journey to Newport in the company of the Rev. Mr. Hopkins. On the way they became embroiled in a theological argument, and Murray's method of answering all questions in scriptural language so exasperated him that he refused to let Murray preach from his pulpit in Newport. Here occurred one of those incidents which Murray considered an act of Providence. He did not know a soul in Newport, but at Hopkins' suggestion he called at an inn, tied his horse outside and entered. He was most cordially received by the landlord, who evidently recognized him. "The moment you came to my door," he said, "it seemed as if someone had said, 'the person who addresses you is a preacher; take kind notice of him,' and I immediately determined to obey that impulse." (10) As in the case of his meeting with Thomas Potter, Murray was overwhelmed with this evidence of providential care.

For two weeks he lectured and preached in Newport in the church of Dr. Ezra Stiles, who at this particular period was absent. Dr. Stiles' diary reveals in no uncertain terms his hatred and contempt for the unlettered and uncouth Murray. John made many friends in Newport, among whom was Mr. Varnum, who became General Varnum during the Revolution.

In October, 1773, Murray made his first visit to Boston. Two prominent men in the city, Mr. Williams and Mr. Thomas H. Peck, were instrumental in bringing him before the Boston audiences. Mr. and Mrs. Peck had been admirers of George Whitefield, and when they found out that John had been associated with him they were doubly interested. Peck had been

a hatter by trade and was known throughout the city by the title of "Honest Peck the Hatter."

On the evening of October 30, 1773, Murray preached his first sermon in the city of Boston in the "hall" of the factory which, according to the testimony of Thomas Whittemore, was opposite the site where the Park Street Church now stands. (11)

On to the near-by towns of Newburyport and Portsmouth moved the Apostle of Universalism. In the former town he stayed with a Mr. Little, who was a disciple and an admirer of Whitefield. Murray was surprised to learn that he slept upon the same bed occupied by the great evangelist three years previous, and preached in the pulpit before which he was entombed.

Still the large congregations to which he preached did not suspect him of harboring heretical ideas. His sentiments were perfectly agreeable to the Calvinists and, being clothed in scriptural phraseology, they escaped criticism. At a later date, however (1776), he aroused the ire of the Rev. John Cleavland, pastor of the Second Church at Ipswich, Mass., who published a pamphlet with a formidable title denouncing Murray's method and calling him a "false teacher." It shows how many of the clergy reacted to Murray. "It may also be affirmed to be an infallible mark of a false teacher, if at his coming into a strange place it is his practice to make use of such language only or forms of speech as he understands to convey to them orthodox sentiments until he has gained their affections, and then little by little, as he finds it will bear, to divulge his corrupt tenets in language directly contrary to what he used at first." (12)

On April 9, 1774, a church of the established order in Portsmouth (Congregational), thinking him a good Calvinist, invited him to become its preacher. Mur-

ray was convinced at that time that he was not ready to accept an assignment in any place, so he refused the offer.

On his return to Boston Murray found that the haven of his preaching had been at work. His congregations increased in size to such an extent that it was impossible to hold services in Mr. Peck's home or in the factory hall. Finally Mr. Peck suggested using the Rev. Andrew Croswell's meetinghouse, of which he was a prominent member. Mr. Croswell was "generally regarded as a highly bigoted and censorious divine." In a poem sent to Benjamin Russell, then editor of the *Boston Centinel*, was a stanza concerning Croswell:

"Sour, croaking Croswell, armed with fire and fury,
Consigns to hell without a judge or jury,
All whom his ignorance is wont t'assail,
For venturing beyond his narrow pale." (13)

Again, after many trips through New Jersey and Connecticut, Murray returned to Boston in September, 1774. On this visit he was greeted with demonstrations of heartfelt joy. Besides preaching in the factory and the home of his friend, Mr. Peck, he also delivered a number of addresses in Faneuil Hall. About a month and a half after his arrival in Boston, a man by the name of Winthrop Sargent, from Gloucester, called on him and urged him to come to the Cape for a visit. His many engagements prevented this at the time. However, on the 3d of November he made the trip to Gloucester and was received by a few warm-hearted friends. Murray was amazed to find that they were already acquainted with Rely's writings. Four years previous to this period an Englishman by the name of Gregory had loaned them a copy of "The Union" by James Rely, and by this time

"the writings of Mr. Rely were not only in their heads but in their hearts." (14) Without a doubt, liberal religious ideas had found fertile soil on Cape Ann long before they read Rely's book or heard Murray preach.

After staying in Gloucester for nine days Murray returned to Boston, only to find that during his absence Mr. Croswell had published a slanderous article in the paper in spite of a promise made to Murray that he would not do so. Immediately John wrote to Croswell demanding that he debate the matter in public, for he did not intend to let such slanderous utterances go without being challenged.

Opposition increased, and was expressed in material form one Sunday in the shape of a rotten egg thrown at the preacher and water poured over the congregation. On the following Sunday matters came to a head. When Murray rose in Croswell's pulpit to preach, Croswell continually tried to interrupt by punctuating his remarks with "It's a lie, a lie, a lie, it's a damnable lie." By shouldering him in the pulpit, kicking his shins and yanking his clothes, the minister tried his best to discredit and humiliate Murray, but all to no avail.

The climax was reached on the following Sunday evening. John was nearly suffocated when he entered the pulpit by the garlic-like odor of asafoetida which lay heavy on the pulpit cloth and in the aisles and pews. As if this were not enough, stones were hurled through the windows, but luckily no one was injured. One large stone, evidently intended for Murray himself, crashed through the window at his back and just missed hitting him. It was a narrow escape and friends in the audience became alarmed for his life. Murray was not daunted. Picking up the stone which had been meant as a missile of death he said: "This argument is solid and weighty, but it is

neither rational nor convincing. . . . yet for our consolation suffer me to say, I am immortal, while He who called me into existence has any business for me to perform; and when He has executed those purposes for which He designed me, He will graciously sign my passport to realms of blessedness. While I have a 'Thus saith the Lord' for every point of doctrine, not all the stones in Boston, except they stop my breath, shall shut my mouth or arrest my testimony." (15)

The stoning continued at several of the following lectures, but Murray was not to be stopped in his preaching. He was not silenced either by physical violence or by scripture cited against him. The full implications of his doctrine were beginning to penetrate the minds of the orthodox, and persecution, hatred and slander were to be his lot. So ended that eventful period from 1770 to 1774.

Summing it all up, what do those busy years in Murray's life reveal? A picture of a man riding numberless miles on horseback over roads which were little more than trails; of strange towns and people, uncomfortable inns, and hostile clergy. A story of endless debates, arguments and expositions of God's love and compassion instead of His severity and judgment; of people pathetically eager for light, leadership and the bread of life which this brave, genial soul could bring them. The tale of a man sustained by such a faith in God's leading and providential care that nothing could stop him. He was a man of great physical power and stamina, possessing a mind at once full of compassion for his fellow men and yet armed against the wiles of his enemies by a marvelous grounding in scripture, native wit and courage.

What a panorama those four years present! The man on horseback riding through towns, cities, hamlets, four-corners and lonely countrysides, carrying

his gospel of salvation and peace, driven on by the great need of the people and the divine compulsion within him. The man John Murray, riding into towns, knocking at the doors of inns, preaching in pulpits and homes, up and down the Atlantic seaboard, loved, stoned, misunderstood and hated. Riding, always riding down the valleys and up the hills, silhouetted for an instant against the sky, his face always toward the light as he journeyed on to new fields.

Chapter VIII

Gloucester and the Chaplaincy

IN the fall of 1774, on December 14, John Murray again visited Gloucester. On the occasion of his first trip to that town in September of the same year he was amazed to find the people on Cape Ann (as he thought a far-distant and benighted spot compared to Boston) well versed in Relly's volume, "The Union." They welcomed the ideas in this book and did not consider them heretical at all. Hence their eagerness to meet and talk with this disciple of James Relly, though Murray did not expect to find such a liberal spirit and open-minded attitude towards his teachings. All this would seem to indicate that the theological atmosphere on Cape Ann was of a more clear and tolerant variety than that found in the Massachusetts Bay colonies. Such was evidently the case. It is true that at a later date Murray met with bitter opposition from those defending the citadels of orthodoxy, but at the height of the struggle no heads were cracked or witches killed.

It is not wholly an accidental occurrence that one of the first Universalist churches in America was organized in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The seeds of liberalism had been sown there long before John Murray landed in America. In any account of the institutions of the town we must reckon with the influences of the sea. As the Rev. Daniel M. Wilson said in a discourse delivered on the 250th anniversary of the incorporation of the town: "The salt breath of the sea,

the mystery and power of it, and the sadness of it have interfused themselves with the life of the people. With the wealth of the sea the prosperity of the town has ebbed and flowed. But in a more deep and subtle way has the influence of the sea entered into the lives of the inhabitants. All the perils of the ocean and that power the sea has to produce sadness and a sense of the solemn mystery of existence, has been exerted upon these people through generations. Profound reverence results from this, and a quick responsive sympathy. The sad spirit of the sea early subdued the stern Calvinism of the Puritan. He was no cruel bigot here." (1) There are no bloodstains upon the record. It was not very plausible that the eyes which were brimming with tears for husbands, sons, brothers and friends who had been claimed by the great deep, could gleam with fierce hatred for Quaker or witch. Extreme fanaticism was tempered to a large extent.

Murray was delighted with the reception of his ideas in Gloucester. He was cordially entertained by members of the influential Sargent family, and gradually he gathered around him a group of zealous followers. In the spirit of the primitive Christians they assembled daily for prayer and a sermon, and continued this practice in the homes of the faithful. Murray makes an interesting comment in his journal concerning his reception in Gloucester: "Here my God grants me rest from my toils. Here I have a taste of heaven. The new song is sung here, and worthy is the Lamb constantly dwells upon their tongues." (2)

During the first month after his arrival the doors of the First Church, of which the Rev. Samuel Chandler was the minister, were cordially opened for Murray's preaching services. Soon, however, his heresy was detected and thereafter he was compelled to preach elsewhere. Dr. Chandler was a very interesting



John Murray in the Pulpit

and quaint character. He was a marked type of the minister of olden times, strong, self-reliant and able to do many other things besides his Sunday morning preaching. He built his own house. He sawed and hammered like a born carpenter, making his window frames and shutters, and even setting "eighty square of glass in a day." There were many other things which this old-time minister did which would be frowned upon today. "My house raised" is an entry in his journal, "and about sixty or seventy people treated with flip and toddy." (3) Here is another entry: "I bought a Jersey girl for five years; gave fifty pounds for her." (4) He also did some weird things with the King's English, for he not only speaks of a certain convulsion of nature being very truly a "shocking earthquake" but in another place describes it as "an ingeminated concussion." (5) After a revival he noted that "Alice Meserve was brought into light last night as she was seeking Christ in the cellar; very full and flaming." (6)

Dr. Chandler's long ministry in Gloucester, though for the most part peaceful and successful, was laborious, and ended in tribulation and sorrow. After Murray's first visit in November the heresy hunters discovered grievous errors in his discourses. Then in "soreness of heart" the troubled minister of the First Church wrote a sermon against this newcomer who taught universal salvation. At the request of many of his parishioners it was sent to the *Essex Gazette*, at Salem, for publication. "As one drawing near the eternal world," he warned his people against the dangerous teachings of "one who calls himself John Murray, who has declared the following things to be his settled opinion: that the whole race, every one of Adam's posterity, have an interest in Christ, and are God's beloved ones; that the whole human race, every

individual of mankind, shall finally be saved." (7) Such teachings were, of course, the rankest heresy to the majority in Dr. Chandler's church. It was a curious thing that while this controversy was raging it was hard to tell whether the references in the record to "the enemy" meant the Universalists or the British. It was plain that the tides of hatred were rising against Murray and his followers. Soon this hatred was to be manifested in a more violent manner.

Murray was never in the strict sense of the term a "settled" minister. He considered Gloucester to be his new home, but he did not relinquish the right to visit other places when he was persuaded in his heart that Providence so directed. Preach the Gospel he must, anywhere and everywhere his God commanded. Writing at a later date concerning this sudden leave-taking of a parish for a trip to some other town or state, the Rev. William Bentley of the East Church, Salem, made a few caustic remarks. "Mr. Murray, the Universalist, has taken another excursion for his health, into the southern states. This singular man is the first example in New England of a man who has connected himself with a religious society who has taken the liberty of evangelizing in our great cities and of leaving them for months to provide for themselves. It is doubtful whether the toleration of such practices originates in indulgence or indifference." (8)

In accordance with this established custom, Murray left Gloucester on the 20th of January, 1775, to visit Portsmouth and Newburyport. The news of his heresy had spread from the Cape to these towns, and many of his former friends and enthusiastic supporters were united in their condemnation of his doctrines and his conduct. All the churches were closed to him with the exception of the Episcopal church in Portsmouth. Even when the opposition increased through the years

the subscribers and parishioners of that church gave him free use of the pulpit where he might preach his peculiar doctrines. Their regard for Murray found concrete expression in the form of a document which they sent him:

"Whereas it is represented that some objections have been made by one, or more persons, belonging to the Church called Queens Chapel, against the doors thereof being opened for the admission of Mr. John Murray to preach the gospel; Wherefore, we the subscribers, proprietors, and parishioners of the Church aforesaid, having taken the same into consideration—Do (in order to remove any difficulties that might arise in that gentleman's breast in consequence of such objections) hereby fully declare our free will, and consent, that the said Church be opened at ALL TIMES, whenever it may be convenient for him to perform divine service in town, more especially during his present stay; and, instead of deeming it an indulgence granted him, we shall, on the contrary, acknowledge it as a favor conferred on us, in his acceptance of this invitation. Portsmouth, May 24, 1781. Signed by twenty-four of the leading members of the Church in Portsmouth." (9)

One humorous incident happened in Portsmouth which clearly revealed Murray's objective method in spreading his gospel of universal salvation. A Mr. Drown, who was a good and regular member of the Established Church, invited Murray to his home. The old-fashioned brick oven had been heating for baking. When it was open, Murray looked into it curiously and asked what they were going to do with it. "Bake bread," was the reply. "I wondered," said Mr. Murray in solemn tones, "if you were going to roast the children." Mr. Drown turned upon him with an expression of horror in his face. "How much

worse," said Murray solemnly, "would it be for you to roast your little family, than for the Infinite Father to burn eternally unconverted millions of souls?" (10) From that hour Mr. Drown rejected with loathing the doctrine of endless punishment.

In spite of the opposition in Portsmouth the Apostle of Universalism attracted large congregations. While there on his various visits he made firm and lasting friendships with the leading citizens of the town. In fact it might be said that his congregation embraced a considerable portion of the wealth, talent, culture and social influence of the community.

On his return to Gloucester Murray found that his enemies had not been idle during his absence. As Judith Murray expressed it in the biography, "their inveteracy was in full proportion to the attachment of his friends, and every means of annoyance was in requisition." (11) Patriotic fervor had mounted high. Fear and intolerance, which inevitably accompany a national crisis, were in evidence. The majority of the citizens were hard-working people. In fact few towns in New England had a larger proportionate share of families which depended upon their daily labor for their bread than Gloucester had at the beginning of 1775. Three-fourths of the men were fishermen and sailors, laborers and mechanics, depending upon mercantile business. With the prospects of their livelihood shut off by the war with Britain and with poverty and dire want staring them in the face, they were in no mood to tolerate theological differences. This statement was made in an article published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* June 21, 1775, concerning the fishing industry on Cape Ann: "The fishermen of Salem, Cape Ann, &c, who were formerly employed in the fishery, are in resentment for being deprived of their usual subsistence. The small boats

employed in the fishery are all carried to a considerable distance up the country, as is all the hemp, turpentine, &c., &c." (12) Deep anxiety and gloom pervaded the town as the year 1774 drew to a close.

Taking advantage of the prevailing temper of the people, Murray's enemies boldly accused him of being a Papist sent out by Lord North to do under-cover work for the English cause. Then again he was a "foreigner," for he had only been in the colonies for four years. Therefore, it was argued, it was not likely that he would enthusiastically cast his lot with the cause of the patriots. In such an atmosphere of hysteria and fear it did not take much effort on the part of his enemies to make these stories appear credible. On many occasions as Murray walked down the streets he was called vile names and sometimes stones were hurled. All the old stories and slanders which had ever been connected with his name in his American travels, were resurrected and additions made to fit in with the local situation. One particular charge made by a certain Mr. Maxwell was that Murray had treated the Eucharist in an unbecoming and shameful manner. This story probably was started by Dr. Ezra Stiles, who got a report from somebody who heard Murray when he visited East Greenwich, Connecticut: "After supper he talked ludicrously of the Lords Supper, as being only drinking a health unto the memory of an absent friend; and profanely said, 'Here is bread, and here is wine; what forbids but what we should have it now?' " (13) It was an easy thing for bigoted minds to warp and twist that story and make Murray seem to hold a flippant attitude toward this historic sacrament of the Church. With this and many other slanderous stories the mob passions were aroused. A town meeting was called to see what steps could legally be taken to get

rid of this Universalist preacher. All the business was transacted in secret, a flagrant violation of the law, in order that Murray's friends should not be aroused and put on their guard. A vote was surreptitiously taken to request Mr. Murray to leave the town of Gloucester. He was advised of the action taken, but apparently paid little attention to the vote of the meeting.

Of course by this time the door of the meeting-house was closed to his preaching, but the homes of the faithful were thrown open for religious services. Their faith seemed all the more precious because of the enmity and persecution. The next logical step for the Established Church to take was to excommunicate the offending members who were supporting Murray. Such notices of excommunication were sent out to seventeen of the most respectable church members.

While this action was being taken in ecclesiastical circles, others were busy digging up a provincial law whereby Murray could be expelled from the city as a vagrant. If this job could be done in a legal manner so much the better. It is not definitely known just what particular statute they invoked, but the following seems to cover Murray's case. It is found in the "Acts and Laws of His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England," under the title of "Admission of Town Inhabitants." "Any person orderly warned to depart from any Town whereof he or she is not an Inhabitant, and being sent by warrant from a Justice of Peace unto the town whereto such person properly belongs, or to the Place of his or her last Abode, shall presume to return back, and obtrude him or her self upon the Town so sent from, by residing there; every person so offending, shall be proceeded against as a Vagabond." (14)

The friends of the persecuted preacher were on the alert, however, and to prevent this law from being carried into effect they deeded him some property which constituted him a freeholder in the town of Gloucester. In this manner they forestalled the attempts of Murray's enemies to cast him out.

After the trying experiences and persecutions during the first two months of his stay in the town he felt the need of a change. During March and April he again visited his friends in Boston and in various parts of Rhode Island. Refreshed by his journeys and contacts with old friends he again returned to Gloucester, and was delighted to find that the zeal of the people for the cause of universal salvation was unabated. Once more they resumed their meetings, perhaps little realizing what persecution and bitterness lay ahead.

Since there seemed to be an affinity between Murray and trouble, it was natural that he should take an active part in the American Revolution. The war for independence could not be treated with indifference by anybody. It divided all men in the colonies into hostile camps, and there was high tension between the two. People were either pro-American or pro-British, and the latter were treated with extreme intolerance.

John Murray, it will be remembered, arrived on the shores of the new world in 1770, and he felt the growing resentment of the colonists even before he landed, for it was the Non-Importation Act which ultimately caused his ship to be changed from her course. Open hostilities broke out only five years after his arrival, so he was in a predicament. He loved England and could not possibly forget his homeland. What was left of his family still lived there, and it was in English soil that his wife and child were buried.

An interesting and touching incident of Murray's feeling for England is told in *The Christian Ambassador* by the Rev. Otis Ainsworth Skinner. As a boy Mr. Skinner once found himself in Murray's study and, looking around the room, noticed a box of earth. He inquired about its meaning and was told: "When I came from England I brought over a couple of mulberry trees in that box. They died; but I have kept the box of earth ever since. I am sometimes treated less kindly than I wish to be; and when I am out of spirits, I love to stand upon the earth in that box, and while I pray for them that despitefully use me, think I am on British ground." (15)

Despite his affection for his homeland, however, Murray cast his lot with the new world, and he became identified with it in many ways. Here he really found himself and was launched upon his life career with enthusiasm and vigor. Where would he stand in this tragic crisis? Would his loyalties be divided? Would he make common cause with the tories or would he side with the rebels?

There is no evidence that Murray hesitated in making his decision. His memories of England were not so sentimental as to blind him to the injustice of the reactionary party in Britain. Possibly his sojourn in Ireland had given him a somewhat broader view of the problem than most Londoners had. At any rate, he adhered to the cause of the colonists in no uncertain manner.

In one of his wartime letters, Murray writes:

"It cannot be denied, that the Sovereign of the universe has evinced as strong a desire to bring all the inhabitants of this lower world into a state of subjection to him, and the laws of his kingdom, as ever the British sovereign manifested to subdue the habitations of this western world, to bring them into a

state of subjection to him, and the laws of his realm.

"The king of Great Britain may not be able to obtain his will; God himself may oppose him. The powers of France and America united may be too strong for him; Lewis (16), we are told, has pledged his royal word in our favour. But, except he should really change his ultimatum, nothing but superior force will ever oblige him to relinquish a plan, which he has so much at heart. . . .

"I confess, if it were left to my decision, whether his majesty of Britain should, or should not conquer this continent, I should not determine in his favour; because, I repeat, our subjection to him may be our subjection to much evil; his career among us might be wild and despotic; he may be under the influence of a bad spirit; he may give but not without upbraiding. Again, admitting he were well disposed, he might not, although a king, be always able to perform his pleasure." (17)

As we know today, many individuals who loved England took this same stand because they distrusted the reactionary influences at work in their old home; indeed, they felt that they were working for the liberation of England by joining the Revolutionary forces in the American colonies. Many recent arrivals, however, were distrusted, and were accused of disloyalty. Murray did not escape the charge, and he naturally suffered much from the suspicions of the super-patriots of his day.

As we have seen in former chapters, the task of spreading the good news of universal salvation took Murray up and down the coast, where he became acquainted with many people of all stations in life: rich and poor, statesmen and unknown every-day folk. In Rhode Island he had preached many times and had become acquainted with men who joined the Revo-

lutionary forces as soon as hostilities broke out. It was natural that he should be thought of by some of these officers as a possible chaplain in the new army, and very soon after the soldiers were assembled he did receive an invitation to act in that capacity.

In one of his letters he describes the incident when the subject was first brought to his attention: "I entered this town last evening, full of painful sensations, greatly distressed, wearied in body and mind, my horse as weary; the town all in confusion; taverns all full; General Green at Bound Brook; no one here that I knew. I went, however, to a tavern—it was full—I beg you will let me have something for my horse; I care nothing for myself. It will be an act of charity; I am come from a distant part of the country, and am very weary. Moved by compassion, they consented; but such a house, such a lodging—I paused, sat down, took the pen as the only relief in my power—Whilst I was writing the name of De Hart struck my ear; he is my friend; he is a dweller in Morristown; he is good and hospitable. Almost immediately I was in his parlour, receiving and communicating the highest satisfaction. He is a Colonel in the army, and was on the point of writing to solicit me to become his chaplain. They insisted, both the Colonel and his lady, upon my abiding with them; sent for my horse, and I am circumstanced beyond my most sanguine expectations." (18)

The official notification of his election came later in the form of a letter from Colonel Varnum dated May 24, 1775:

"Dear Sir:

"Amidst that concurrence of events which the great Creator in infinite wisdom direct, for the accomplishment of his own purposes, a British arma-

ment hath set hostile foot upon American ground. What the design of the Almighty may be, we cannot at present absolutely determine. One thing we know, *our cause is just*, and also that the Parent of the Universe can do no wrong. An army hath been raised in this Colony, which is now stationed upon Jamaica Plains in Roxbury, and that this army may do honor to themselves, and the cause in which they are embarked, it is requisite propriety of manner, regularity of conduct, and a due reliance upon the Almighty controller of events, should be cultivated and enforced. The most probable human means we can devise to effect an object so ardently to be desired, consist in a decent, sincere, and devout attendance, at opportune seasons, upon divine worship. We have, therefore, selected you, as a Chaplain to our Brigade, well convinced that your extensive benevolence and abilities will justify our choice. We cannot, without doing violence to the opinion we have formed of your character, doubt of your ready compliance with our united request. The support you will receive shall *exactly correspond with your feelings, and your wishes*. We are, dear sir, etc. etc. etc.

“signed in behalf of the Brigade,

“*J. M. Varnum.*” (19)

The actual setting up of machinery for the office of chaplain in the army was apparently effected by General Washington. There is no doubt that the moral and spiritual welfare of the soldiers was of grave concern to Washington, and on many occasions he wrote orders to the army officers urging them to maintain high standards of morale. “The Congress authorized the employment of chaplains, after Washington had urged it, and the general orders of July 9, 1776, when the Army was in New York City, directed that: ‘The

Colonels or commanding officers of each regiment are directed to procure for Chaplains accordingly, persons of good character and exemplary lives. To see that all inferior officers and soldiers pay them a suitable respect and attend carefully upon religious exercises. The blessing and protection of Heaven are at all times necessary but especially so in times of public distress and danger. The General hopes and trusts, that every officer and man will endeavor so to live and act as becomes a Christian Soldier defending the dearest rights and Liberties of his country.' " (20)

Shortly after this official act of Congress, General Washington sent out an official communication, granting excuse from fatigue duty on Sunday so that the men could attend service. He urged the officers to set a worthy example to the men especially in such matters as "profane cursing and swearing" and gambling. He dealt with these vices very severely, as witness the following: " 'Colonel Washington has observed, that the men of his regiment are very profane and reprobate. He takes this opportunity to inform them of his great displeasure at such practices, and assures them, that, if they do not leave them off, they shall be severely punished. The officers are desired, if they hear any man swear, or make use of an oath or execration, to order the offender twenty-five lashes immediately, without a court-martial. For the second offence, he shall be more severely punished.' Similar orders were repeated, when the occasion required; and they afford a convincing proof of the high religious motives by which he was actuated in his command." (21)

Mr. Murray was assigned to the First Rhode Island Regiment, and joined the forces in May, 1775. This was one of twenty regiments known as an "Army of Observation," and was organized under General

Nathaniel Greene. The officer in charge of the First Regiment was Colonel James M. Varnum, who later became a Brigadier-General in the Continental Army. The troops served by Murray were moved from Roxbury to join the forces besieging the British. They arrived at their positions on June 8, 1775, and were subsequently moved to Prospect Hill, now in Somerville. On August 5 these regiments were declared part of the regular Continental Army.

Records in Rhode Island have been consulted (22) but it is impossible to find any mention of Murray's exact whereabouts during these troop movements. It is assumed that he followed his regiment and served with them at the above-named stations. There are comparatively few references to the work of Chaplain Murray, but there are some well-authenticated facts.

One interesting fact is that when Murray accepted a commission in the army he refused all regular salary, according to his usual practice. He preferred to depend upon voluntary aid as his need arose. There were occasions when Murray keenly felt the need of money so that he could help those in distress or, as he put it, "relieving the oppressed, rocking the cradle of declining years, drying the tears of the widow, and protecting the fatherless." General Washington not only offered him a salary, but there were "reversionary expectations" connected with it; that is, there was the probability that he could have been granted some kind of regular aid which would have lasted as long as he lived. (23) The fact that he refused this throws a good deal of light on the entirely unmercenary character of Murray, his complete trust that "God would provide," and his profound interest in the service which he could render.

Another well-authenticated incident is related by

the Rev. Charles H. Woodman: "John Murray, the father of Universalism, preached often to the army at this time. Having taught, one Sunday morning, his doctrine of Universal Salvation, he chanced to be followed by a minister who preached strict Calvinism. 'Tom,' said a soldier to his comrade, 'you see how different these men preach, which are you going to believe?' 'I'll not believe either of 'em yet awhile, till I see how it comes out in general orders,' was the soldierly reply." (24)

It would seem from this incident that the chaplains of that period did not hesitate to inject their sectarian theologies into their sermons, and naturally there was strong resentment against Murray's views on the part of other clergymen in the service. (25) This resentment grew until it broke into a storm of protest and a movement was launched to oust Murray from his position. The usual arguments were used, whether they were relevant or entirely irrelevant to the case.

It seems possible to place a large part of the blame for the unfortunate incident upon the Rev. John Cleavland, who served as chaplain in the same army and at the same time as Murray. Mr. Cleavland was minister of the Second Church of Ipswich (now Essex), only seven or eight miles away from Gloucester. He wrote "An Attempt to Nip in the Bud the Unscriptural Doctrine of Universal Salvation," which was sent to the printers on March 1, 1775, and was published at Salem in 1776. It is known that Cleavland joined in the petition to have Murray removed, so we are probably justified in assigning to him a leading part in the attack. (26)

Finally the matter was brought before the commanding officer, and George Washington made reply as follows:

"General Orders, Sept. 17, 1775.

"The Rev. Mr. John Murray is appointed Chaplain to the Rhode Island Regiments, and is to be respected as such." (27)

Furthermore, "Washington answered criticism by having Murray transferred from the chaplaincy of a regiment to that of a brigade, which change was a promotion. And he officiated thereafter as the chaplain of three combined regiments of Rhode Island troops. History furnishes no more signal instance of a rebuke of bigoted intolerance." (28)

This forthright and unequivocal action by the highest authority immediately settled the problem, and the heretic chaplain was henceforth secure in his position and work. He was naturally disturbed by the criticism, especially coming from fellow-officers in the army. Morale in military life may be easily undermined by carping criticism by those in authority; but Murray, as was his custom, went on with his work. He had such unbounded confidence in his own integrity and in the truth for which he stood, that, like Paul, he could say, "If these be for us, who can be against us?"

There are no "war sermons" from Chaplain Murray so far as the known records are concerned. It is consequently unsafe to say exactly what his attitude toward war was, either in general or in particular. Here and there in his letters he refers to the suffering caused by the conflict: "Oh, this war, this desolating war! What sad havoc the dogs of war have made!" But this does not indicate that he was either a pacifist or a militarist. Apparently Murray deprecated fighting and all that went with it, but he also apparently accepted it and was willing to do his share as a non-combatant officer.

One of the happy incidents of this period of his life was the fact that he was chosen to accompany a detachment to wait upon General Washington when he took over the supreme command of the army at Cambridge.

It was not long after his entrance into the army before Murray wrote that he was finding himself out of his natural element. Many of the soldiers were rough and, as he put it, "ungovernable." Their interest in theology was not keen, and he began to feel that his work was not particularly effective. He was primarily the defender of doctrine, the controversialist, and the chaplaincy gave him little leeway for this primary urge. He seriously questioned the value of his services in the army.

About this time he suffered from a severe attack of "bilious fever," which we interpret to be dysentery, a common disease among the soldiers. Sanitary and health conditions among armies were very poor in those days, and the death rate from sickness was often much greater than that from bullets. Murray's condition became sufficiently serious to cause his retirement after about nine months' active service. He was accompanied by the army physician to Gloucester, where he rapidly recovered.

There can be no doubt that Murray continued to hold the high regard of the ranking officers of the army and of the men. He continued his intimate friendship with many of the generals and later became a close friend of several men who were in high office in the government.

Chapter IX

Marriage and the Gloucester Trial

FOR once in his life, John Murray was glad to have a quiet place where he could retreat from the buffetings of "outrageous fortune" and spend a period of time in physical and mental rest. His magnificent strength was temporarily sapped by the illness acquired in the army. He was grateful for the peace which his intimate friends in Gloucester made possible for him by their solicitous care. Quiet convalescence was good after months of the turbulent warfare which he endured with his troops.

Not for long, however, could the iron constitution and vigorous spirit of the crusader remain inactive. Soon he was restored to health, and conditions in Gloucester, mentioned in a former chapter, began to appeal to his sympathies. A fishing village was a "one industry town" in those days and the war paralyzed that industry so badly that the whole community suffered. Economic conditions became extremely acute and poverty visited the homes of the majority.

Murray, always sensitive to suffering, felt an obligation to do his part. He was not a "social gospel" man, for the era of the social gospel had not dawned. He was, however, a man of action and he did have a strong sense of Christian obligation toward those who were in want. So he started to solicit aid from his friends, who responded most generously. General Washington headed the list with ten pounds, which was not only a large amount for those days, but the

fact that he subscribed was further evidence of confidence on the part of America's "first gentleman" in the preacher of Universalism. The names of those who followed by subscribing five pounds or less sounds like a "Who's Who in the Revolutionary Army," most of the distinguished officers being included.

The distress of more than a *thousand* persons was relieved by this magnanimous action on the part of Murray and his friends. The more one contemplates this large-scale relief, the more remarkable it seems that in the days of 1776, when there were no W. P. A.'s, one man could have been instrumental in doing so much. The townsfolk were, of course, grateful and on April 3, 1776, there was spread upon the records the following:

"Voted unanimously, That this town returns their sincere thanks to the compassionate donors of a sum of money sent by the hands of Mr. John Murray for the relief of our poor, which he lays out in provisions, and distributes among them according to their necessities." (1)

It appears from a careful reading of the above record that Murray personally supervised the granting and administering of this aid, and he apparently made a careful investigation of the need and economic status of the people before giving provisions.

Is it not King Lear who laments "How sharper than a serpent's tooth is base ingratitude"? Murray had good cause to join the lament, for it was not many moons after his heroic aid to the town before theological opposition and suspicion began to revive.

On *a priori* grounds one would naturally suppose that any friend who came with bread in one hand and heaven in another would be hailed as an unmitigated blessing. But human nature is a strange complex. The folk of Gloucester were so enamored of hell

and they hugged the doctrine of eternal damnation so closely to their bosoms that they could not long endure John Murray in their midst. A whispering campaign was inaugurated in the village attacking the apostle of good news from all possible angles. Since he was so recently from England, he must be pro-British and hence disloyal. Perhaps he was a spy of the hated government, helping to undermine loyalty of the colonists to their cause? Or perchance he was an agent of the Pope in disguise? Everything hateful in those days was subsumed under the blanket condemnation "popery," no matter how far removed from the Vatican it might be. Or perhaps he was immoral? Could anyone disprove it? Propaganda under one form or another got in its deadly work, until the anger of the natives was worked into a white heat. Epithets and stones were hurled at the man as he walked down the street, until his life was in danger. But Murray was a man of courage. He stood his ground undismayed and unshaken, never swerving from his steadfast purpose.

The situation was now complicated, however, by the fact that he was practically a pastor and no longer a completely independent man on horseback. It is one thing to come into a town for a few days, burst some oratorical bombs, and then go on to other battlefields. It is quite another thing to live in one community for a number of years, become intimately associated with one group of people, and act as both organizer and administrator of an institution. The latter role was new for Murray, and it caused him to be divided in his impulses. Whatever he said was now complicated with undeniable responsibilities. He did not hedge or equivocate, but he did not charge the battle line as if he were a lone soldier of fortune. Whenever he smelt smoke, he wanted to attack, but

by exercising great control he endured for a long time the insults of his enemies.

At one time his enemies believed that they had him trapped. They revived a local statute which would have compelled him to leave town as a vagrant since he owned no real estate. His loyal friends, however, swiftly came to his aid. Mr. Sargent, one of the distinguished men of Gloucester, gave him a deed to a corner of his garden, thus making him a "free holder" in the community. This made it legal for Murray to remain in town.

Blocked in one attempt, they pressed charges of corrupting the morals of the army, thus taking advantage of the patriotic tensions of the time. Again Murray adequately met the charge. He produced the following letter from General Greene:

"Camp at Middle-brook, May 27th, 1777.

"These may certify, that Mr. John Murray was appointed Chaplain to Col. Varnum's Regiment by his Excellency General Washington, during the army's lying before Boston. And during his officiating in that capacity his conduct was regulated by the laws of virtue and propriety; his actions were such as to make him respected as an honest man and a good citizen. He lived beloved, and left the army esteemed by all his connections and patrons.

"Nathaniel Greene, Major General." (2)

This effectively silenced the scandalmongers who hoped that charges of immorality would finally defeat him.

Frustration, however, usually drives people to more desperate measures. Murray's immovability angered them. The more they were balked, the more determined they were to achieve their ends, and their

determination was met with equal conviction on the part of Murray not to give in. This ambassador of God became heretic, dangerous man, corrupter of youth, unpatriotic foreigner, blasphemer! He must be defeated!

Gloucester citizens were determined to leave no stones (mineral or verbal) unturned, so their Committee of Safety called him out of a sick bed one night when they knew that his friends would not be present. Committees of Safety in those days were presumably 110 per cent superpatriotic heresy hunters, intolerant and itching to get a victim. They preferred all possible and some impossible charges against Murray, and warned him to leave town. But the sick and hunted man refuted every insinuation and would not budge.

The details of this scene are preserved in the account of a man who was actually at the meeting. It contains tense drama and is one of the high lights of Murray's career.

"The chairman of the meeting opened the business. 'We have sent for you, to know who you are, and from whence you came?' 'Do you mean where did I come from last?' 'I say where did you come from?' 'I have been in various places in this country, sir.' 'I say where did you come from when you came into this country?' 'From England.' 'From what part of England?' 'London.' 'What business had you to come to this country?' 'Business, sir! I felt disposed to come and came.' 'What business have you in this town?' 'The same as I have in every town where I happen to sojourn.' " (3)

One of the accusers at this point began using innuendoes. " 'I conceive we have sent for this man to know from whence he came, who he is, and what business he has here; this is a time of difficulty, we

are at variance with England, he calls himself an Englishman, we do not know what he is. He associates with a great many, whom we look upon as enemies to this country, and they go to hear him converse—I think—I cannot call it *preaching*.' " (4)

The committee continued in this vein, sometimes refusing to allow the accused to speak for himself. When he could speak, he did not equivocate. Finally he was asked: " 'Have you any credentials?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Show them.' 'I have none present, there are many in this town who have heard me, and received my testimony, they are my credentials.' 'Ay, that is nothing—you see he has no authority. How could you think of preaching without authority?'

" 'When I came into this country there was no war, I believed it to be a land of civil and religious liberty—every charter, and every law made among yourselves, breathed a spirit of toleration, I felt assured I should be allowed liberty of conscience; my intentions were upright; a conviction that God had ordained me to proclaim the gospel, has been powerfully impressed upon my mind, and I am still convinced, that I ought to preach the Gospel.' " (5)

While this episode is not comparable to Luther's stand before his judges and while it does not make an era in religious history, it is nevertheless of historic significance. It was a test of the validity of American freedom of conscience. Murray, without a friend on the committee, stood squarely on his rights and stoutly maintained his principles.

The accusers proceeded to make the age-old charge: "You hurt the morals of the people, and a great many who hear you are enemies to the country."

"Those who hear me, and believe what I deliver, can never be injured in their morals."

"I do not believe you."

"You have not heard all I have said in defense of my persuasion."

"I have heard enough; I neither believe nor like it."

"Well, sir, there is no act of assembly to compell you to hear; but you should remember your neighbor is entitled to equal liberty with yourself."

"You deliver very erroneous principles."

"My principles are all to be found in the sacred records of divine truth."

"Ay, so you say."

"I was not apprized that I was cited before a spiritual court." Turning to the chairman, Murray continued:

"Sir, this gentleman asserts that I associate with a great many enemies of this country. I demand that they be pointed out. If I associate with an individual of this description, it is unknown to me."

Seeing that threatenings and warnings were not able to drive this evil man from their midst, an official town meeting was finally held and the question was brought before the people as to whether the action of the Committee of Safety should be sustained. Fifty-four votes were registered in favor and eight against. The small number of negative votes seems to indicate a packed meeting. Also it may be evidence of the fear which social pressure produces in a small minority, especially in wartime.

Even though the Universalists failed to muster more than eight votes there were many more than eight hearts in sympathy with the heretic. Men and women continued to flock to him and he calmly went about his business, winning converts to the larger thought of God. Every man, woman or child who took a stand with this wicked man had to count the costs. They were subjected to a fierce public opinion,

which not only called them hard names but which brought economic pressure to bear upon them also, although, as noted in a former chapter, persecution did not go so far as burning or hanging.

Conditions could not go on indefinitely without some official action on the part of the established church, which we remember was in those days almost identical with the community. Early in the year 1777, those who had been regularly attending Mr. Murray's services were summoned to show why they absented themselves from regular worship "in God's House." Sixteen persons were thus called upon to give account of themselves, and it may be safely assumed that these were the pillars of the Universalist movement. Among them were such families as the Sargents, Pearces, Babsons, Parsonses and others who have kept up the fight for religious liberalism for two centuries or more. This sturdy band of pioneers was finally cut off from the established church, an act which in those days carried with it a good deal of stigma. We can easily imagine the gossip which buzzed in the small community—whisperings and elbow nudgings taking place whenever one of these blasphemers passed a group of the really Christian, God-fearing folk.

The Universalists, however, were not beaten or utterly dismayed. A common attack makes for a solidarity among those who are under fire. It increases their consciousness of kind and redoubles the strength of their convictions. It is the old truth that persecution strengthens and sustains. The First Church, without realizing it, forced the Universalists to take steps which ultimately led to their organization and efficiency.

Excommunication occurred in September of 1778, and early in January, 1779, the followers of Murray

adopted Articles of Association, declaring their purpose to fellowship together as a church of Christ. Like nearly all minority groups, there was a sense among them of being especially called and set aside for a purpose. They wrote:

"Inasmuch as it hath pleased God of his great mercy, in every age of the world, to choose a people for himself and revealing to them his secret; and as this Great Lord of heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath been pleased to reveal to babes what he hath hid from the wise and prudent: we, the subscribers, gratefully affected with a sense of the divine goodness in thus distinguishing us think it our interest and bounden duty to let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven." (6)

Perhaps the mind and hand of Murray are here in evidence, for we remember that from early days he had a strong sense of being God directed and chosen to do a particular task for the divine pleasure. On the other hand, Murray did little or no formal writing at this time.

They further state: ". . . . we are determined, by the grace of God, never to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but as a Church of Christ, meet together in his name." They set up Jesus as their sole master, and he is declared to be their guide. They declare that "as dwellers in this world, though not of it, we hold ourselves bound to yield obedience to every ordinance of man for God's sake; and we will be peaceable and obedient subjects to the powers that are ordained of God, in all civil cases; but as subjects of that king whose kingdom is not of this world, we cannot acknowledge the right of any human authority to make laws for the regulating of our conscience in any spiritual matters." (7)

This statement, coming as early as 1779, while not the first enunciation of spiritual freedom from civil or ecclesiastical tyranny, must be treasured as one of the clear and bold utterances on the subject, and while thus declaring themselves "no more to be entangled by any yoke of bondage," they nevertheless "expect to suffer as much persecution as the laws of the country we live in will admit of." (8) (Is this evidence of a persecution complex, or were they justified in this expectation on the grounds of their past experiences?) "But we resolve by the grace of God none of these things shall move us to act inconsistent with our character as Christians. We will as much as possible avoid vain jangling and unnecessary disputation, and should we be reviled, endeavor in patience to possess our souls." (9) (It would be difficult to find a better statement of a desire of the persecuted group to keep the sweetness of the spirit.)

The pact then goes on to receive "our friend and Christian brother, John Murray," as their minister. This they do in the consciousness that God had sent him for the purpose of revealing His will. They give him their blessing in his labors both in Gloucester and elsewhere in the New World, and end their Articles of Association by declaring that they will meet once a month to confer and deliberate upon whatever "may tend to our mutual profit."

For some time previous to the split, and for a considerable time afterward, the Universalists met in private homes, the "parlor" in those days being appropriate for religious services. Soon, however, Murray and his adherents wanted a church building of their own, where they could be entirely independent. They therefore built a very plain church building of the "meeting house type" with little or no attempt to make it esthetically appealing. A gift of a barrel

organ was made by an old sea captain, so they were not wholly without music. But the organ was of the mechanical type fitted for a very limited number of tunes and those were not of the popular variety. Universalism, however, continued to flourish, and its apostle was called into many surrounding towns to declare the good news. Wherever Murray was denied the privilege of speaking in a church, which was often, he met his people in barns (not always clean) or in private homes.

Meanwhile the Gloucesterians, as Mrs. Murray called them, were highly indignant at the presumption of the heretics in building their own church and in actually continuing to make proselytes, so they schemed further revenge. They could not legally prevent the Universalists from meeting, as the laws of the new commonwealth protected the right of any sect or group to assemble for the purpose of worshipping God. There were two avenues open for attack, however, one being economic and the other ecclesiastical.

First, the established church, from which most of the Universalists departed, instituted measures for collecting support from the Universalists, as support for the church was compulsory. When the new group broke away, they did not *ipso facto* establish the right to cease contributing to the old congregation. If they wished to make gifts to the new movement, well and good, but they must continue helping the old. This was not merely an economic hardship, but was essentially unjust to the individual's conscience. It put him in the position of enforced support for ideas and practices which he absolutely disbelieved, and which he was actively combating.

The little band of Murrayites was naturally greatly aroused over this attack, and they began

maneuvering to overcome the injustice. One group believed that the best way to settle the matter was to have legislation passed which would cover the issue, but others believed that they should not invoke new laws for a right which in their interpretation was already implied in the State Constitution, and in human nature. The latter group won. The alternative was to seek repayment from the established church by trial, thus establishing the fact that they already possessed freedom from taxation in support of a doctrine which they disbelieved. The latter course was adopted, but there was one major stumbling block to its effective pursuit—John Murray.

As a matter of legal technicality, the suit would have to be brought in the name of the minister for recovery of moneys due to him, but exacted by the other church for the support of its minister. We have remarked several times that one of Murray's firmest convictions was that all his services in America were to be rendered "without money and without price." He depended entirely upon voluntary support from friends who offered him the necessities of life as he journeyed from town to town. When asked to let the church bring suit in his name, he naturally recoiled. The last thing he would ever want to do would be to go through the pitiless publicity of a court, recovering money! He so wrote his friends, and while they sympathized deeply with him, they pressed the point that by undergoing this temporary distress he might help the cause of religious freedom for years to come and for many new movements still unknown. After much agonizing and prayer he finally yielded—another evidence that the responsibilities of a settled minister changed the point of view of a free-lance horseback rider.

The First Parish, meanwhile, hastened matters

by seizing household goods of some of the Universalists and selling them at auction. In one case they even went so far as to take the anchor away from a sea captain just as he was about to sail! This brought matters to a head, so suit was brought "for procuring and establishing our Religious Liberties." Yankee dander was up. The Universalists were determined to fight until they won, realizing full well that this was no unimportant local quarrel, but that a profound issue in democratic government was at stake.

The case came before the court for trial in 1783. It dragged on for review and appeal until 1786. During this long period Epes Sargent wrote a document which was entitled "An Appeal to the Impartial Public by the Society of Christian Independents, congregating in Gloucester." He states that: "A Question has been agitated respecting us, the decision of which, ultimately regards every citizen of the Commonwealth, and instantly affects the several religious orders of Episcopalians, Baptists, Presbyterians, Sandemansians, Quakers, and every other denomination of Christians, who in this state have been called Sec-taries." (10). He continues to answer the arguments raised against the Universalists, namely, that they are not duly and legally organized, that they do not constitute a true church, and that their minister is not a properly qualified minister of "religion and morality."

Murray was thus brought into the limelight on grounds other than that of seeking money. He had to undergo public scrutiny as to the sincerity of his purpose, and the fitness of both his character and his theological system. Was he properly ordained, since he usually called himself "clerk" of the society which he served?

After much arguing and pamphleteering on both

sides, libels and recriminations, charges and counter-charges, the court handed down a verdict in June, 1786, declaring that Mr. Murray was in the true sense a "teacher of morality and religion," and that he had a right to recover payment of taxes from his followers to the established church. The amount finally collected in small sums over a long period of time was about seventy-five pounds. The sum was not large. Perhaps the cost of the suit was nearly if not quite equal to the moneys recovered. But there was something far more important than the payment of taxes at stake; there was a principle of religious democracy involved. If this case had not been won by Murray and his friends, the cause of freedom in religion would have been set back for a long period.

The trial did not establish the right of Americans to listen to the preaching of new doctrines, or to worship according to conscience. This was already established in law. But those rights would have remained comparatively ineffective if every new religious movement were handicapped with a double economic burden—the necessity of supporting the standing ecclesiastical order, and the need of financing their own group. The victory of the Universalists was a victory for the right of every American not only to believe, but to promote actively and organize effectively a truth as he saw it.

During this long period of tension, Murray encouraged his people, preached in Gloucester and outside, and tirelessly worked for the cause.

Despite the decisive victory of the Murray forces, the opposition was not ready to lay down its arms. Religious controversies are often the most acrimonious because both sides feel that they are supporting an "absolute" God-given principle. The orthodox group was as sincere as the liberal. They felt that the whole

system of Christian morality and sound theology was on their side, while the heretics were sure that truth had been especially revealed to them. The conservatives were fighting not only for the established order, but for what they believed to be the only enduring basis for all order. Their animosity to Murray was not merely opposition to a particularly irritating man; it was to a symbol of insecurity and fearful change. Consequently, they continued the fight, determined to win one way or the other.

They next attacked the Apostle of Universalism on the grounds that he was not an ordained minister, and that the marriages which he had performed were consequently illegal! This issue raised the bitterest feelings, as it involved the sanctity of the home and family. Some people might be willing to be lenient in matters of ecclesiastical organization or discipline, but they were adamant when such a fundamental matter as marriage was concerned. So a storm of protest was aroused against Murray on this charge. Furthermore, a fine of fifty pounds was assessed against him. This was most serious, for he had performed many wedding services, and if his enemies started to persecute him relentlessly, he would be in a dire predicament.

It will be remembered that at this time Murray was practically without a penny, as he preferred on principle to live on donations. He might even be sent to jail. What to do? His enemies undoubtedly now had him down. His friends counseled that he should leave the country for a time while they appealed to the legislature to settle the matter. In the flowery language of Mrs. Murray, "inclination pointed his way over the pathless deep for the purpose of once more visiting his native shores, holding sweet converse with a few select friends and folding to his filial bosom his venerable mother." (11)

His friends, especially those in Boston, provided him with ample moneys, so he quietly stole away to England for a period of much-needed change. At least his persecution could not reach him while abroad.

In February, 1788, the legislature in Boston was petitioned in the name of John Murray to declare him an ordained minister. The petition recounts the historic facts of his sojourn in America, and the understanding which he shared with his people from the beginning of his Gloucester residence that he was a pastor in full and regular standing.

The House passed the petition with a large majority of votes, and this action was followed by a similar vote in the Senate. Hereafter Murray was free to perform such ministerial services as were expedient in connection with his work. The edict was signed by both Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

Meanwhile, the American evangelist passed through one of the severest storms on record and landed on the southern coast of England. Here he was hailed by some as America's greatest preacher and listened to with keenest interest in many pulpits. By others he was considered a refugee fleeing from criminal prosecution. (His Gloucester enemies apparently were unrelenting in sending news about him wherever he went.)

He finally arrived in London and found his mother, now a woman of comparatively advanced years. He had a warmhearted and satisfying reunion with her, but we hear nothing whatever of any of his brothers or sisters. They apparently had either died, moved away or drifted from his affections while he was away in the New World.

When in London he was called upon to preach in one of Whitefield's old churches and he was again urged to remain and take up a permanent pastorate

there, and, considering the fact that war had been finished so short a time, and that he must have been suspected of pro-Americanism, it was a tribute to his cosmopolitanism and adaptability to be thus invited. Many distinguished clergymen and laymen met him, and for a long period after his return to his new home he carried on a voluminous correspondence with them.

On the return voyage Murray had for company the former President of the new republic, John Adams, and his wife. The ex-President urged Murray to preach for the ship's company and crew, which he did many times during the slow voyage, and after returning to America Adams and the Apostle of Universalism continued their intimate friendship.

On arriving in Gloucester, the returned pastor was met with the good news of his being sustained by the state legislature and by his rejoicing church members. Refreshed by the ocean trip, and by the perspective which comes from getting away from the scene of trouble, he went at his work with renewed energy and satisfaction. The governor of the state welcomed him in Boston and he was considered by a host of friends to have won a very important triumph.

The committee of the church lost no time in arranging a formal and public service of ordination. There were to be no doubts in anyone's mind this time about the authority and official standing of their minister. On Christmas, 1788, "Mr. John Murray was ordained to the pastoral charge of the Independent Church of Christ in Gloucester." By vote of the church, "according to the institutions of the first churches in New England, and in perfect conformity to the third article of the declaration of rights, in this public manner, solemnly *elect* and *ordain*, constitute and appoint Mr. John Murray, of said Gloucester, clerk, to be our settled Minister, Pastor, and teaching

Elder; to preach the word of God, and to inculcate lessons and instructions of piety, religion and morality, on the congregation; and to do, perform, and discharge all duties and offices, which of right, belong to any other minister of the Gospel." (12)

Even a lawyer could not misconstrue such a forthright and unequivocal declaration. The day was marked by notable exercises and as much publicity as possible was secured in the press of the various New England communities where Murray was well known. At last he could relax with a reasonable sense of at least temporary security, free to go about his parochial duties, and to take his usual horseback trips to the various "preaching stations" which he irregularly supplied.

One more happiness was to be added to the brimming cup: in October, 1788, at Salem he was married to Judith, the widowed daughter of his close friend, Winthrop Sargent. For eighteen years John Murray had remained a widower in America—without a home of his own and without the rewards of family life. He was forty-seven years of age and it was natural that at this time, as he approached fifty, he should long for the comparative quiet and stability of married life.

His wife was born in Gloucester in 1751, ten years his junior, making her thirty-seven at the time of marriage. In 1769 she had married John Stevens, who was apparently not successful in business, as he fled to the British West Indies to escape imprisonment for debt. There he died in 1786, leaving his widow free to become Mrs. Murray two years later. (13)

It is agreed by most of the writers of the time that Judith Sargent was a woman of more than average intelligence and distinction. She possessed much beauty and charm and was an exceedingly progressive

woman in those days when the female of the species was restricted in her activities. She had read some Rely literature before Murray arrived on the scene, and was liberal on many questions, especially woman's place in society.

Under a *nom de plume* she wrote a great deal of poetry which was published in the Boston papers, was an essayist and commentator of distinction, and even wrote a play which was produced professionally in Boston. On account of her literary work she is mentioned in two recent books devoted to an historical review of early American drama and fiction. She wrote the closing chapters of the Life of John Murray. Many of her writings were gathered together in three volumes and published by subscription in 1793. Among the first subscribers were John Adams, George and Martha Washington, and many of the first citizens of the day. In the dedication she writes: "My desires are, I am free to own, aspiring, perhaps, presumptuously so. I would be distinguished and respected by my contemporaries; I would be continued in grateful remembrance when I make my exit; and I would descend with celebrity to posterity." (14)

This is a frank revealing of at least one of her characteristics—a strong desire for public recognition. Without doing her an injustice we may call her a social climber in the best sense. She was full of ambition, wanted to know famous people, worked hard to be worthy of their friendship and always strove to push her husband John Murray into the limelight. We have a strong feeling that much of the social success of Mr. Murray in his later years was due to the energy, devotion and hard work of his wife.

Two children were born from this union—a son who died in infancy and a daughter who married and moved to Natchez, Mississippi, where her uncle was

the first governor of the territory. After John Murray died, Mrs. Judith Sargent Stevens Murray went to Natchez to be with her daughter, and there in 1820 she passed away. There are now no members of the family living.

One unfortunate fact about Mrs. Murray's removal to the South has had an important bearing on the writing of Universalist history. When she left New England she carried with her a great many precious documents, letters, etc., which she carefully filed away in her new home. These papers were later discovered, but dampness had destroyed the legibility of practically everything.

Chapter X

Boston and Vicinity

JOHN MURRAY preached in the town of Gloucester for nearly twenty years. His ministry there covered one of the greatest and most difficult periods in American history. The date of the beginning of his labors in his first settled parish coincided with the beginning of the Revolutionary War. He served his country in that war. He ministered to the needs and sufferings of the people of Gloucester, and endured the hatred and slander of his foes in the established church, besides fighting several important legal battles that the principles of religious freedom might be established. Meanwhile he was preaching, in season and out, the glorious doctrines of universal salvation. The influence of his personality and the purity of his life, which no slander could besmirch, won him a host of friends and the respect and love of a most loyal congregation.

The tireless hand of Time moved on. Mrs. Murray in the biography expressed it in this manner: "And now a large number of friends in Gloucester were numbered with the dead. The times were oppressive. The Bostonians were solicitous to hail the preacher as their settled pastor." (1) John Murray accepted the call of the First Universal Church in Boston in 1793, on the condition that he should occasionally visit Gloucester, and that the members of his Cape Ann parish should feel free to call upon him for help in important or distressing exigencies. These stipulations

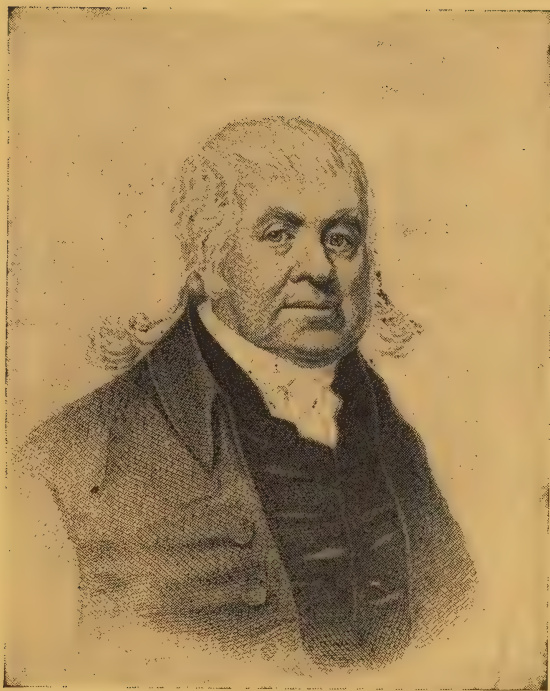
were accepted, and he began his remarkable ministry, which lasted for twenty-two years.

There are many reasons why Murray was wise in making his choice of the Boston pastorate rather than remaining in Gloucester. In the first place, after his long pastorate among the fisherfolk, he had probably preached himself dry—a common experience among all ministers who remain a long time in one place. This was probably especially true in the case of the first pastorate for a man who had primarily one message to deliver. Murray was the promoter of one idea, the champion of one all-absorbing cause, and as such he felt the urge to go where he could meet a new group of people.

Another reason was the fact that Boston, while it had lost heavily in this period, was still the intellectual capital of New England. Many of America's greatest preachers either had preached there or were to settle in the liberal atmosphere of America's Athens. As a city it was comparatively generous to heretics. It was and has been famous as the birthplace of new religious movements. So Murray naturally desired to take up his residence nearer to the center of things, where he could reach a larger hearing.

Again, by moving to the capital of the state, he could be in intimate contact with the men who were shaping political and social events. He was not, himself, a politico-parson, a man who eagerly took part in the nation's legislative turmoils, but he knew most of the prominent men of his time and enjoyed their companionship.

Finally we must not forget Mrs. Murray, the ambitious. It is altogether reasonable to suppose that the author, playwright, poet, was delighted at the prospect of residing in so important a city. Here she could meet authors of her kind and perhaps build up a *salon*



John Murray

in her limited way, thus pushing her husband into the intellectual stream of things, and deriving great satisfactions for herself and family.

It will be recalled from the account in a previous chapter that Murray delivered his first sermon in Boston on October 30, 1773, and on the 26th of November, 1773, he preached in Faneuil Hall. Of this meeting the records say that the most influential people of the town were present. At the close of the discourse, on learning that the preacher proposed to leave the city the next day, they earnestly besought him to return soon and continue the good work so auspiciously begun. From this time the doctrines spread and commanded the interest of many of the most intelligent people of the city.

The Rev. Andrew Croswell made some interesting comments concerning a later discourse which Murray delivered in Faneuil Hall under the date of October 4, 1774, in the *Boston Post*: "Mr. Murray is come again and preaches Relly's gospel in Faneuil Hall. Perhaps no preacher in Europe or America ever had greater talent in putting out people's eyes than Murray. Whatever pains is taken by the ministers of this town on the Sabbath in exhorting their people to repent of their sins, there is reason to fear Mr. Murray will undo in the evening what they have been doing in the day." (2)

Although his home was in Gloucester at this period, Murray continued to preach from time to time in Boston and received from two to four pounds by contribution until September 14, 1788, when the following vote was taken: "Voted to request Mr. Murray to minister to us one half of his time, or as much as he can, consistent with his other engagements." (3) On September 28, it was voted to give Mr. Murray four pounds per fortnight or one hundred and four

pounds a year. After his formal installation in 1793 it was voted that his salary should be twenty-two dollars each Sunday.

During the first few years of its existence the pulpit of the Boston church was more often supplied by Adams Streeter than by Murray. Streeter was without a doubt aided by others, but he became the leader, or "elder." We know very little about this valiant Universalist pioneer. He was a brother of the Rev. Zebulon Streeter, and the latter once made the remark, "I would willingly part with all my earthly possessions, if it would make me able to preach with the eloquence of my brother Adams." (4) Evidently the members of the First Church enjoyed and appreciated that eloquence.

Another name, that of George Richards, should be recorded as a helper and builder of the First Church. During the Revolutionary War he was in the navy as purser and chaplain, under Commodore Manly, and at the close of the war he went to Boston and engaged in teaching. Being of a poetic turn of mind he contributed to the periodical press of the day. He became interested in the ideas of Universalism, and as a result often preached when Mr. Streeter was absent. Because of the unselfish and untiring labors of Streeter, Richards and devoted laymen, the Boston church grew and prospered until the time came when the Universalists felt the need of a permanent church home.

Accordingly on the 29th day of December, 1785, Messrs. Shippie Townsend, James Prentis, Jonathan Stoddard, John Page and Josiah Snelling, on behalf of the newly-organized society, purchased a Congregational church which for twenty-four years had been presided over by Samuel Mather, a son of the famous Cotton Mather. Samuel's congregation dwindled

away to a mere handful. After his death, the faithful few who were left were under the necessity of selling their house of worship to meet the demands made against them. Sebastian Streeter, who was minister of the First Universalist Church for almost forty years (1824-1864) made this interesting comment concerning the purchase of Dr. Mather's church: "By a remarkable train of circumstances, God caused the enemies of Universalism to erect a church, and in due time to put the friends of this despised and persecuted doctrine in the lawful and peaceful possession of it, as a place of its future and stated dissemination." (5)

This church was built in 1741 (John Murray's birth year). It was a wooden structure fifty-five by sixty-five feet, with a colonial style of architecture, situated on Hanover Street in the north end of Boston. There was no steeple, and galleries extended along the sides and street end. The pulpit was high with a sounding board overhead, the whole apparently copied from the interior arrangement of King's Chapel. At the rear end of the church was a small building in which was a huge fireplace. It was the custom every year to purchase a large amount of charcoal, and on every Sunday in the winter (of course there was no fire in the church) foot stoves were filled by the sexton and put into such pews as the proprietors had agreed with him for the service. Stoves were not installed until the year 1816. One of the peculiar little charcoal foot warmers may be seen in the study of the Gloucester Universalist church.

On Wednesday, October 23, 1793, John Murray was installed as pastor of the Universal Meeting House in Boston. The service was simple and reverent. The solemnities of the occasion were introduced by Deacon Oliver W. Lane, who addressed the congregation and later gave the charge to the minister.

It was a rather unique charge which the deacon made on that memorable occasion, and should here be recorded: "I, therefore, in the name and behalf of this church and congregation—supported by the constitution of this commonwealth, declare you, John Murray, to be the Pastor and Teacher of this First Universal Church in Boston; and in their name I present unto you the Sacred Volume, as the rule of your faith and practice, and as containing a perfect and complete revelation of the perfections and will of God: and I furthermore declare unto you, that so long as you continue to preach the Gospel, as delineated in these sacred pages, which is glad tidings of great joy to every creature, so long shall you be considered as our Pastor, and no longer." (6)

In 1794 Mr. Murray and his family moved to their new home at Number 5, Franklin Place, now the lower part of Franklin Street, where they continued to reside until his death in 1815. A picture of the appearance of the city at the time of Murray's arrival is given by a British traveler, Henry Wanser: "This town or city, contains about eighteen thousand inhabitants. Their footways are not yet paved with flat stones, and the horse and foot way being alike pitched with pebbles, with posts and a gutter to divide them, like the old fashioned towns in England. The buildings are but indifferent; many of them, as well as their churches are weather-boarded at the side, and all of them roofed with shingles. A very awkward looking railed inclosure, on the top of the houses, for drying clothes, gives them a very odd appearance. The part of the town called New or West Boston, is an exception to this, for the houses are all neat and elegant (of brick) with handsome entrances and door cases, and a flight of steps." (7)

Thus began John Murray's formal ministry in

the capital at a momentous and troubled period in American history. Because his work cannot be properly understood apart from the political and economic backgrounds, it is necessary to touch upon those conditions. Engulfed in the backwash of the Revolutionary War, Boston, like many other cities in the colonies, suffered severely. The population, which before the war had numbered nearly twenty thousand, sank at the time of the siege to six thousand, and when peace came it had risen to but a little over twelve thousand. Military occupation, pestilence, and the flight of the Tory party had done their devastating work and had decimated the population. Ten years elapsed before the number reached the point at which it stood prior to the Revolution.

By the time Murray began his formal work in the new field, eleven years after the close of the war, the city had assumed a more normal aspect. Democratic principles were taking the place of the old aristocratic traditions. "The old simplicity, as well as the old stateliness, were alike slipping away. Those were the days when the gentry lived in large houses, enclosed by handsome gardens, and amused themselves with card parties, and dancing parties. But the enemy was at the gates—a great, hurrying, successful, driving democracy." (8)

It took about a decade to bring about anywhere near normal conditions after the upheaval. That gaunt specter, Inflation, which follows nearly every war, arose to plague the middle and lower classes. True enough, as is always the case, a minority gained wealth by profiteering and by skillfully controlling the necessities of life, but in general the suffering was widespread.

In a letter to Robert Redding in England dated May 23, 1796, Murray complained of conditions in

Boston: "It is very true that the necessities of life are very dear, and will be till the war (war on the Continent) is over; but this is no injury to trading people. It is only injurious to salary men. I suffer much from it, though I have twenty-two dollars a week. But I pay four hundred dollars a year for my house, and have but nine pounds of bread for a dollar, five pounds of butter for a dollar, a good piece of beef ninepence a pound, veal sevenpence, vegetables dear in proportion, milk sixpence a quart, eggs one shilling a dozen, wood, before it is put on the fire, six dollars a cord. We have no other fuel here. We give our maid in the kitchen six shillings a week. We burn twenty-five cords of wood a year. You may judge from this rough sketch how it is at present in this country. At this time I do not know a dearer country to live in in the world." (9)

Because of the economic pressure and the shrinking of his salary through inflation, Murray finally encouraged his wife Judith to go ahead with her cherished plans of publishing her writings mentioned in the last chapter. Mrs. Murray wanted to write one hundred papers on miscellaneous subjects, fiction, drama and essay, and then collect them together into three volumes and sell them at a dollar a volume. In a letter to an English friend in 1795 John says: "Till very lately, she (Mrs. Murray) never thought of turning her labors to any account in this way; but finding out that nothing can be saved out of my support, and that, as I came into this world a considerable time before her, I may go out of it much before her, and considering she has a little daughter, who with herself may be thrown on an unfeeling world without the means of making friends by the mammon of unrighteousness, I have, as well as others, ventured to persuade her to make this trial." (10)

The volumes were published under the title of

"The Gleaner" with a formidable subscription list of seven hundred and fifty-nine persons. Judith Murray was a most ambitious, able and energetic woman.

Generally speaking, the relations between Murray and the people of his parish were most friendly. Occasionally, however, those little rifts appeared which are bound to come sooner or later in the life and work of any minister. In a very gentlemanly manner John called the attention of his parish committee to a matter which had long been troubling him. He mentioned this subject in two or three letters and, without a doubt, the committee was a bit lax. On June 6, 1801, he writes: "You have, by calling and settling me in this place, given me the rank of Clergyman. It has been the custom from time immemorial, for the people to furnish their Minister with his wood. When I have wandered from wharf to wharf in search of this article I have been frequently asked if my congregation did not provide my wood. They wondered to see me looking after it. I will not say that I am as good, and as deserving as other ministers, but I will say I am as *proud*, and let me add, I am sure I am connected with as *good* a congregation as any in Town, knowing the people as I do, by their fruits. Will you have the goodness to appoint a committee to attend to the supplying me with my wood every year, as other Ministers in This Town are usually supplied." (11) Apparently the committee did not look after this business in a proper manner, for Murray wrote another letter in the same vein in 1804.

In 1799 an incident happened which revealed an intolerant and stubborn spirit on the part of both Mr. and Mrs. Murray, and which displeased the majority of the congregation of the First Church. It so happened that a very good friend (so called) of the Murrays visited them in Boston. Being very rich

and wise in the ways of the world and its commerce, he very kindly offered to take Mrs. Murray's two thousand dollars, which she had inherited from her father's estate, and in a short time make another thousand to add to this sum. Mrs. Murray would be under no obligations, and she could be absolutely assured of a good return on her money. The Murrays gave this "loyal" friend their money. They trusted him and asked for no security. Two years later after getting no word or reply to his letters, John began to get very uneasy, so he made a special trip to Philadelphia to find out what had happened to the two thousand dollars. He soon found out to his sorrow. He planned to be absent from Boston for ten Sundays and he had made arrangements with Hosea Ballou, who was then preaching in Dana, Mass., to fill his pulpit. It happened on the last Sunday of his preaching assignment that Ballou preached a different kind of doctrine from that of Murray. The sermon was tainted with Unitarian sentiments. This so angered Mrs. Murray that as soon as Mr. Ballou finished his discourse, she had a gentleman announce to the amazed audience that "the doctrine which has been preached here this afternoon is not the doctrine which is usually preached in this house." Ballou made no answer to this charge, but simply said to the congregation in a quiet voice, "The audience will please to take notice of what our brother has said," and proceeded to read the closing hymn.

On his return Murray found that this incident had created a great deal of "confusion" and resentment among his congregation. In fact, many of the people liked the young Mr. Ballou so much that they opened negotiations with him to come to Boston and form a new church. This he refused to do because, as he said, "I cannot do anything to injure Brother Murray,

nor the beloved society to which he ministers." This incident reveals the widening breach between Murray and several of the other Universalist leaders. He was very sensitive concerning these differences in belief between himself and his brother ministers in the liberal fold, and it pained him greatly to see them, as he thought, treading on dangerous ground. Because of these differences of opinion Murray absented himself from several important convention sessions, and afterward he expressed his regrets that he had done so.

It is the familiar story of what age does to human beings. The arch heretic, the champion of new and revolutionary ideas, begins to fear and tremble at the next generation's radicalism. Heterodoxy in one man's life becomes orthodoxy. Murray's fight for a saner, larger thought of God was of course within the bounds of reason and propriety. But these young and daring upstarts like Ballou—they were striking at the very heart of the Trinitarian system, and that would never do! God's unbounded, undefeatable love—that is sound and scriptural.

Further than this Murray could not go. He was literally frightened at the prospect of the new system of theology which the new school of Universalists was bringing forth. The new Universalists were Unitarians. They saw no reason for the fall of man and the Christology that went with it. They were proclaiming not only a new God, but a new humanity, which discarded the Relyan view of union with Christ as the second Adam who paid for the sins of the first Adam.

Thus Murray gradually began to draw into the past, both he and his wife being unable either to understand or sympathize with the newer Universalism.

Murray had not lived and worked in his new parish many years before the hostility of the clergy soft-

ened to a considerable extent. It was such a welcome and astounding change that, in one of his letters to an English friend in 1799, he likened it to a revolution. "Who could have thought it," he said. "I was yesterday invited, in a very polite manner, to attend at an ordination in one of the oldest meeting-houses in this town, at which were present the Episcopalians, Baptists, and all others in this place; and a stranger would have found it difficult to have determined which was of the one or of the other denomination, except by his dress. When I see myself seated in the midst of those who were once my greatest enemies and bitterest persecutors, I am ready to ask, Is it that they are better? Or that I am worse?" (12)

When Murray was confined to his home (1799) with a distressing and painful ulcer under his arm, every clergyman, except one, came to see him and in the kindest manner called him their brother. One, however, displayed a bit of the old-time intolerance, with which Murray was very familiar. He expressed the wish that the Universalist minister would not recover. The old, harsh theology was breaking up under the impact of war, social change and the preaching of men like the apostle of the larger faith.

Even when Murray was the settled minister of the Boston parish, he still continued, as was his custom when in Gloucester, to visit other towns and cities where interest in his doctrines had been shown. Because of the nature of his pioneer work it was necessary for him to watch carefully the growth of these movements. In fact the early societies which were formed under Murray's preaching were, for the next few years immediately following their formation, under his direction and care. He was like a bishop over them, making occasional visits and ministering to their needs. This was especially true of those at

Gloucester, Boston and New York. This point was clearly brought out in a rather interesting reply which he made to a call from the Philadelphia church. He stated that he was under obligation to divide his Sundays between Gloucester and Boston, and then added: "This, one would suppose, would be sufficient for me at this period of my laboring life. I have, besides this, to visit, when I am able, sundry congregations in various parts of the country, as Newport, Providence, Cumberland, Milford, Grafton, Newton, Salem, Portsmouth, etc." (13)

In 1795 Murray made a trip to Bennington, Vermont, to attend the Universalist convention. He was elected moderator and Hosea Ballou clerk. He was very much impressed with Vermont and he tells, in a very interesting manner, of his experiences in a letter written to his good friend Robert Redding in Truro, England: "This new state took the name of Vermont from the Green Mountains that run through it. After going something more than one hundred miles from home, you enter on the borders of this new state; and for many miles pass over a range of stupendous mountains, the tops of which are frequently above the clouds. Never did I see meadows as rich as these. The sides of the mountains, even their summits are covered, not only with rich verdure but rich pasture. It is the richest grazing country in the world. I breakfasted with one of these people. 'I was,' said he, 'the first man in this town that ever planted an apple tree or built a house. My wife was the first white woman who ever lodged in this town. Yet this year I have cut one hundred fifty tons of excellent hay, and shall make one hundred barrels of cider.' To give you some idea of their manner of living, let me introduce you to the breakfast table, covered with a handsome damask cloth, on which was the most excellent

coffee, and tea and the best of sugar,—but the sugar made use of with the coffee was made on their farm, from the maple trees; toast, bread and butter, crackers, a plate of good ham, a dish of fried trout, caught in a brook that ran by their house, a plate of good cheese, a plate of honey, and a dish of broiled pigeons, and what they are never without morning, noon and night, I had liked to have passed over—a large pitcher of cider.” (14)

One of the reasons for Murray's success in the ministry (it would have stood him in good stead in any walk of life, however), not only in Boston but elsewhere, was his genuine interest in the lives and affairs of other people. Over and above the power of his preaching was his ability to get acquainted with people and to help them in their numerous difficulties. Long after they had forgotten his rather cumbersome system of theology they remembered, with gratitude, John Murray the man. They could not soon forget his kindness or his sympathetic understanding of their problems. He contacted people in all walks of life, from the common laborer and artisan on the one hand to the statesman, general and president on the other. With one accord they were glad to know him and to call him their friend. Because of this ability to gain the confidence and trust of his fellow men, John Murray's life was never dull or commonplace.

He owed a great deal also to his remarkable and gifted wife, Judith Murray. He was proud of her literary abilities, and any successes which she won in this field were heartily applauded. In a series of letters written by Mrs. Murray to her parents, while she was on a visit with her husband to Philadelphia in 1790, she revealed the respect shown to Mr. Murray by noted public men of the Revolutionary period. They went to Philadelphia to assist in organizing a convention of

the Universalists of the United States, the first attempt in our history at a general organization. The descriptions of noted persons given in these letters, of the personal appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Washington, their public receptions and daily life, the descriptions of public buildings then occupied by Congress, are very interesting. For instance she described a session of Congress which was meeting in New York at that time: "A question of much importance was agitated and investigated by the several speakers with a warmth, perspicuity, and energy which did them honor: while gentlemen with all the imaginable sang froid, were walking to and fro, their hats occasionally on or off, reading the newspapers, lolling on their writing stands, picking their nails, biting the head of their canes, examining the beauty of their shoe-buckles, ogling the galleries, etc., etc. Yet we were fortunate enough to hear some of the best speakers." (15)

The progress of the cause of Universalism in Philadelphia was interestingly portrayed by Mrs. Murray's pen. She clearly revealed how many of the intellectual and political leaders were interested in her husband's message and work: "The family of Dr. Franklin is among the foremost. Mrs. Bache, the doctor's daughter, says that it was her father's opinion that 'no system in the world was so effectually calculated to promote the interests of society as that doctrine which shows a God reconciling the lapsed world to Himself.'" (16)

Again, writing of the celebrated Dr. Rush, she says: "Dr. Rush is a man of sense and letters. I am happy that I can name Dr. Rush as an open avowed Professor of, and ornament to the religion of Jesus. Addressing Mr. Murray this morning with much candor, he thus expressed himself: 'Why, my dear sir,

you have stood much alone. How have you buffeted the storm? What a torrent of prejudice, malevolence and calumny you have had to encounter. Twenty years ago I heard your name,—you were preaching in Bachelor's Hall. No consideration would have induced me to come within a mile of the place, and had I met you I should not have conceived it could have been you, except I had found you with the cloven foot and horns. But now peaceful to myself is the revolution. The Bible is a consistent book, and everything that is excellent it contains.' " (17)

On their return journey from the Philadelphia convention, which by the way lasted fourteen days, Mr. and Mrs. Murray stopped for a few days in New York. Here they visited President Washington and received a call from Mrs. Washington. John Adams, the Vice President, sent his carriage to convey them to his home outside the city. While allowing for a certain amount of exaggeration in her account, the letters of Mrs. Murray to her parents certainly reveal the fact that many of the leaders in the American political scene knew and appreciated Murray's friendship.

One particular letter tells of the peculiar funeral customs which prevailed in New York one hundred and fifty years ago. After describing the manner in which the body was dressed she went on to say: "It was then placed in the entry and every person is at liberty to examine it. Eight pall-bearers are chosen, all of whom, together with the minister and physicians are not only presented with gloves but with fine linen scarfs. The scarfs are worn at the funeral and the ensuing Sunday; the pall bearers and physicians attending at the meeting where the deceased was accustomed to worship. Every person who attends the funeral, both within and without doors, is, previous

to the interment, plentifully supplied with wine. A waiter is supplied to every room and they are very attentive. Large quantities are often swallowed. Ten gallons of prime Madeira were lately expended at a funeral." (18)

The work in the Boston parish went on from year to year, interrupted from time to time by visits to other Universalist churches and conventions. The columns of the old *Columbian Centinel*, published in the years 1798 to 1804, reveal the fact that Murray married a great many people and conducted many funerals, both in Boston and in the outlying towns. Differences of opinion arose, of course, and rifts occasionally appeared in the relations between pastor and people, but these things were all submerged in the profound respect and admiration which the people of Boston had for John Murray. Much of the old bitterness and hatred which had dogged his footsteps whenever and wherever he spoke had died away. The Apostle of Universalism also found, to his sorrow, that his particular theological interpretations and translations were being discarded by a new race of Universalists which was arising in town and city. The impress and power of the mind of Hosea Ballou were being felt, and the Unitarian emphasis was supplanting the Trinitarian ideas. These things troubled Murray, for he felt they boded ill for the future.

The work and the influence of the old First Church in Boston may well be summed up in an address delivered by Sebastian Streeter at the last service "holden" in the old meetinghouse in 1838: "What multitudes have here found deliverance from the withering torments produced by a belief in the graceless dogma of endless woe? What hosts, obtained the rapturous assurance of interminable blessedness through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ? What

floods of tears have here been wiped away? What oceans of anguish dried up? How vast the number for whom the path of life has been smoothed and made pleasant, and the gate of death lighted up with the smile of hope, and resignation, and peace?" (19)

This church, under Murray and his immediate successors, grew into a strong organization, and in the first fifty years of its existence it developed sufficient missionary zeal to help six societies in the vicinity to organize and build churches of their own. All these new groups became in turn strong, well attended and self-sustaining.

The gospel of Universalism, a philosophy of confidence in the universe and of hope for humanity, began to spread into the highways and byways of the seaboard. It struck a responsive chord in human nature, and while the old pessimism died hard, it began to yield to the rising tide of the new religious liberalism.

Chapter XI

The End: Evaluation

THE storms of life for our champion of causes were beginning to subside, and a period of calm set in toward the end of his pastorate. The rugged man was growing old, and he naturally felt less of the inner fire. He grew more mellow with the years, probably less resentful of opposition, more kind and understanding. Slowly he came to possess "the quiet mind, all passion spent." Surrounded by his little family—a wife who idolized him and a daughter whose youthfulness and gaiety cheered his declining years—the warrior's mind became serene and happy. He was coming into port in quiet weather.

Universalism, too, while not by any means accepted by the majority, was beginning to be reckoned with as an established movement. Antagonism to the fundamental idea did not disappear by any means. Occasionally an old war-horse would smell smoke, paw the air and snort some good old hell-fire from his nostrils. But hell's ramparts were falling and John Murray in Boston was now an accepted pastor, honored throughout the city and beloved by his congregation.

As the years came on, the local parish became more generous with its leader. It granted him the services of younger ministers, who relieved the strain of parish management upon the preacher, leaving him freer for work of his choice.

With greater leisure, Murray began to turn to

the study of literature—a world which had been opened to him in Ireland, but which he had neglected for a more active career. He appreciated the great English writers, dramatists, essayists, poets. His understanding of them was not that of a critical scholar, but that of one unschooled in the niceties of analysis.

We have remarked several times that Murray did not do much writing of a formal kind. His letters and sketches fill three volumes, but there is hardly anything in them that is worthy of being called literature. He did, however, write a great deal of poetry. Whenever a great occasion stirred him, he dashed off a poetical expression of his emotion and then—threw it into the waste-basket! Mrs. Murray has preserved for us one such poem written on the occasion of the death of the Earl of Chatham. One hour after he received the news, he composed twelve stanzas, if such they may be called, from which we quote one example:

The fawning sycophant oft sought his smile,
But piercing eye-beams struck the caitiff blind;
The foes to virtue trembled at his nod,
While her glad sons flocked hovering round their sire.
The merchant watched his eye; the sons of art,
The swain who turns the glebe, but chiefly he
On glory bent, who ploughed the watery way,
Panting to grasp the treasures of the globe,
He carefully this pole-star still observed,
And safely voyaged, with this star in view.
How wild, alas! he'll wander now 'tis hid.

Perhaps it is fortunate that the poet had the habit of throwing such effusions into a place where posterity would never see them! For an old man, however, such pastimes were innocent and probably gave a great deal of satisfaction.

Health, which had been Murray's priceless endowment, began to fail at the turn of the century, and occasionally he had warnings of serious trouble ahead. Apparently he had a mild shock which did not incapacitate him, but which gave himself, his family and his physicians grave concern. It was evident that he must slow down, ease the nerve tensions, and frequently get away from the responsibilities of parochial duties. An interesting letter dated December 17, 1803, describes the situation:

The Committee of the Church of Christ
Statedly assembling in Bennet Street

My dear Friend—I thank you for the more than polite attention you have shown me, in giving me the vote of the Church and Congregation. I have the honor and happiness of serving in the work of the Ministry, to which by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ I am called. . . . I am sorry there are any of our mutual friends who are opposed to my going this journey. I am persuaded they would not, were they acquainted with my circumstances. Ever since I was so affected by that severe, and alarming shock I suffered so much from, I have made it my business to consult every Gentleman of the Faculty here in New York and Philadelphia; they agree in giving it as their opinion that what I then suffered was indicative of a Paralytic (sic) disorder, and that nothing would save me from this *dreadful disorder* but frequent Journeys. I tried this remedy last summer, but found the heat too severe. I then determined not to risk it any more in the summer months, and, however necessary journeying may be for me in my circumstances, I never had resolution enough to leave my Congregation till I could obtain for them an acceptable supply. . . . An unexpected event turned up *this* winter,

Mr. Jones determining to move from Phila. and, having at that time, no assurance of a settlement in Gloucester, his connections in Phila. wrote to me requesting me to come and help them in their distressed condition, Mr. Jones ingaging to supply my place till my return: a better opportunity than this I conceived I could not have, and therefore determined, if God will, and he should dispose the hearts of his People to give their consent (without which I think I should not go) that, how unpleasant soever it may be to travel in this season of the year, I would risk it. . . . I have a Letter from Mr. Jones informing me that his Friends in Gloucester are willing he should continue with my Friends here till my return.

Now, my dear Friends, I have given you a true statement of the matter. I wish our Friends in general may be made acquainted therewith, and I am persuaded there is not one who deserves the character of Friend but will be convinced of the propriety of the step I am taking.

I trust you will find the presence of our divine Master with you in my absence. I have no doubt of your treating our faithful friend and faithful servant of our divine Master with affectionate tenderness, and unfeigned affection. I hope I shall be indulged with your prayers to our Saviour on my behalf, that he would please to bring me back in due season in a better state of health to my Family and Friends.

With grateful affection for all past proofs of your regard, I remain

Your affectionate Friend

and devoted servant,

John Murray.

Dec. 17, 1803.

These excursions into neighboring communities and even as far as Philadelphia perhaps helped to prolong his usefulness. He undoubtedly enjoyed the trips immensely—renewing old friendships, being idolized by fellow pioneers. Physically the travel was a hardship, but mentally it was a refreshment and relaxation. His wife usually accompanied him and was always extremely solicitous regarding his health. He had the best available physicians and all was done that could be done, except to retire completely from all work and effort. This prospect would be appalling and he could not think of such a possibility.

Finally, the inevitable happened. On October 19, 1809, he suffered a severe shock, and was from that day forward helpless. His invalidism lasted approximately six years and was grievous to bear because he had been so active. The horseback rider was now rooted to one spot. The eloquent and fiery preacher could no longer ascend the pulpit to thunder. The public contender could no longer meet his adversaries in debate. He was now a prisoner, as Mrs. Murray says, "a prisoner of hope."

Friends came to visit the fallen warrior, some keeping up their visits with great regularity for the entire period of invalidism. His assistant often spent the entire morning with him, and he nearly always had a Bible open on his knees. He studied the Scriptures hours at a time and never wavered in his interpretation of a God of love. His faith was not once shaken during the long period of suffering. He had no doubts about the final happiness of all men, and he often yearned that the day of his own deliverance might come. Sometimes an orthodox friend would ask him questions calculated to test his belief, but he always answered with an unshakable confidence.

Despite Murray's long illness he was retained as

senior pastor of the church, even though he could not preach there. The pulpit was filled by the assistant ministers, by traveling Universalists and by local pastors. Dr. William Bentley wrote:

"At Boston I heard that several of the Congregational ministers had occasionally preached in the Universalists' Meeting Houses. Not by exchange of pulpits, but by a charitable aid to the incumbent John Murray, who is disabled by a paralytic affection. The ministers supplied their own pulpits with their own friends. Mr. Murray still lives and is sometimes carried to public worship, but is unable to address the assembly. Mr. Mitchell, his assistant, soon left, and there has been some dissention respecting the candidates which have been heard as to the choice of a successor." (1)

Perhaps the heaviest cross which Murray had to bear was to hear the church bells on Sunday morning summoning the people to worship, realizing that he was powerless to move. Occasionally a mood of rebellion would sweep over him and a few tears would fall down his cheeks as he looked at his helpless body and yearned to be with his people again. Perhaps his highest happiness came when on rare occasions some friends carried him in their arms to his old pulpit and he was able to sit through the service. His hair was now snow white, his body worn, the expression of his face changed to that of suffering. When he was carried into the church and the people rose to do him honor many a man and woman looked up to him with reverence as one of the long line of apostles who have come "that men may have life and have it more abundantly."

The end came on Sunday morning, September 3, 1815. He gave a blessing to his family: "Remember, there is One who loveth you, with an everlasting love,

and who will never leave you nor forsake you." For two or three days he spoke incoherently, largely quoting Scriptural texts. Gradually he fell into a quiet sleep and without evidence of pain or struggle passed away.

Thus ended the life of one whose days were full of drama and strife, sorrow and joy—a valiant witness for high religion.

The following notice of his death appeared in *The Palladium*, a Boston newspaper, Tuesday, September 5, 1815:

"On Sunday morning departed this life, in certain hope and full expectation of a blissful immortality, the Rev. John Murray, senior pastor of the First Universal Society in this town, in the 75th year of his age. The deceased was well known as the first public teacher that promulgated in this country the doctrine of the Universal Love and the Grace of God to a lost world, through the alone merits and atonement of a Divine Redeemer and Savior. Many are the witnesses of his labors of love, in season and out of season, through a long course of years, in the vineyard of his Lord and Master, and many can seal to the truth, and happy effects of his ministry. . . . His remains were respectfully entombed yesterday afternoon."

The grave is situated in Mt. Auburn Cemetery, near Boston, and every year on Memorial Day a group of Universalists meet there for services of commemoration. (2)

How shall we estimate the worth of this man whose life we have been following through the changes and vicissitudes of fortune? What place does he deserve in history? After two hundred years have given perspective to his character and deeds, can we call him great, mediocre or insignificant?

Biographers are tempted either to make heroes of

their subjects, or to "deflate" them and show all their weaknesses. We have tried to portray Murray as a real person, neither too good to be true, nor yet stripped of all honor and glory. Being human, the man was both strong and weak. He had his moments of greatness and his periods of pettiness. He displayed magnificent courage and yet frequently ran away from trouble. Like other men he was not thoroughly consistent throughout his whole life. It is extremely difficult to say of a human being he is thus or so. The process of oversimplification leads to unreality, but the following evaluation of John Murray is offered as an honest and we hope an unbiased attempt to summarize his character and his place in history.

First, we should say that the subject of this biography was not a highly complex type of person. This is of course only a relative truth, as no human being is entirely simple. But Murray was not sophisticated, and most of his actions show that he dealt in a quite obvious way with situations one at a time as they arose. There seems to be no cold calculating of the future. Some men's lives remind us of the chess player who, with the first man on the board, can see the end of the game. Not so with this man. He seldom sat down to map out a long-range move. He almost never maneuvered men or events to suit his own purposes. He was trustful almost to the point of being naive. His life was an open book for all to read, and he assumed that others were like himself.

As a natural corollary to his simplicity, we should say that Murray almost always exhibited a directness that was one of his charms. Subtlety was as far removed from him as from a child. His thoughts and emotions lay on the surface of his character, and when either were aroused they flashed forth without any

attempt to conceal or dissemble. After hearing him preach, the people must have felt a forthrightness about him that left an impression of simple directness that would win men to his personality if not to his ideas. True, he sometimes did not come out with an unequivocal declaration of his whole theological system the first time he preached, but that was simply a technique for introducing himself, not a subtle or complex intellectual process. Wherever Murray went, or whatever he did, he was transparent. One could "see through him" to the inner workings of his motive. Beneath the surface was an honesty that could not be gainsaid.

The apostle of good tidings to the new world was not in the highest degree original or creative. If his leading ideas be carefully analyzed, it will be seen that he owes most of them to others. When Wesley came into Ireland preaching in the highways and byways, he followed the leader and accepted, at least in part, the new interpretations. So with Whitefield, whom he so greatly admired. When he came to hear and study Rely he again accepted his system of "Union" and final redemption. Mrs. Murray tells us that up to the very last days of his life he changed no "jot or tittle" of Rely's beliefs. He could not contemplate the new Universalism with tolerance or understanding. He created no new philosophy or theology. His patient work on the Bible added greatly to the Scriptural "proofs" of what he and his followers believed, but he, himself, was neither original nor creative.

If the authors of this volume had been asked to prepare a pamphlet setting forth quotations from Murray's writings, they would have failed to produce anything remotely acceptable to the public. It would have disappointed everyone. The reason is that Murray did not produce a single page of great

literature, and there is hardly a sentence of his that shows intellectual penetration of the highest order. This does not imply that he was a mere sounding board sending back echoes of what he heard. He always accepted the beliefs of others only after sincere reflection or perhaps even resistance.. Whatever he said was his in the sense that he had incorporated it into his own being; but no great new ideas originated from within his mind.

What, then, was the secret of his power? Why, after two hundred years, do we celebrate his life?

First, and a very important reason indeed, he was a man of great breadth of feeling. When the larger view of the universe and of man's destiny was unfurled before him he saw its truth and championed it. His emotions were on the side of a better, saner interpretation of life, and emotions are of tremendous importance. Every psychologist will tell us that intellectual systems in themselves are not powerful enough to move men greatly. We are made to act by strong emotions. Murray thus gave to the new religious movement of his day an impetus and value which many another man more profound of scholarship did not give. He made the larger hope *glow* in the hearts of his hearers. They did more than assent to his doctrine. They wanted to live it and spread it over the earth. He turned an idea into a mission. He made that mission the central and controlling passion of his life.

Furthermore, he dramatized the new theology, thus giving it an almost legendary character. The story of John Murray, a modern Jonah, running away from his destiny, but being cast upon the shore of the new world in the presence of Thomas Potter, is one of the most extraordinary incidents in ecclesiastical history. If it had occurred in the Catholic Church it

would have been called a miracle, and long before this time both the actors in that stirring drama would have become saints. The dramatic has a powerful appeal even in the "age of reason." Witness the popularity of the motion picture.

So John Murray launched the Universalist movement in America with an almost Biblical event. Both he and his people saw in it the hand of God. Perhaps other leaders of greater intellectual acumen were prior to or contemporary with this man fleeing from sorrow. But none had the qualities of a great dramatic climax. Murray thus became the symbol of a movement and people revered him. Legend may be more powerful than analytic truth.

Finally, we may say that Murray had at least one element of true greatness—he was on the side of history. The past belonged to his enemies, the future was his. Not so much by critical analysis as by spiritual insight he sensed the process which enlarged men's view. He did not open wide the door looking towards the unities and universals. He did not single-handed create a philosophy of the all-inclusive. But he opened the door far enough so that others could catch glimpses of a great new world of mind and spirit. His logic did not carry him to the *Weltanschauung* of the seers of the twentieth century. We must not blame him, however, for not being two hundred years ahead of his time. It is enough that he set in motion certain forces which have gone on and will go on to their destiny. That destiny is a world in which the divisive forces which separate and antagonize men shall be held under control, so that those influences which make for unity and universality shall gain ascendancy.

Murray championed Universalism against partialism. His enemies believed in a cosmic order

divided inexorably into fragments. Their Weltanschauung was that of a broken, disjointed universe. Their hope was to flee the destiny of the damned and to get into a corner of Heaven with the saved. The apostle of hope saw deeper into the nature of reality. He sensed the larger unity which integrates the broken segments into "the perfect round." Men have a common destiny, hence a common life. Men are one because life is one. Partialism goes down to defeat when Universalism dawns upon consciousness.

No man, either in America or elsewhere in the world, can tell what debt he owes to John Murray. The contributions of all men are so inextricably inter-related that it is difficult if not impossible to say, "This we owe to Murray." But he did his part valiantly and we are the richer for it. He cried out not merely against Hell, but against a philosophy which makes cruelty, frustration and despair central to the nature of the universe. He and his followers gave their fortunes and their lives to the emancipating conviction that at the heart of life there is something decent that makes life worth living. Sin and brutality are facts, not to be ignored. But are they the central facts? Murray declared with mighty emphasis "No!" If he were alive today he would declare with Kagawa, Schweitzer, Gandhi and other spiritual leaders, "Love is the Law of Life." Cruelty and hate are of death. Love, because it is creative, will triumph.

Such is the great philosophy which the Apostle of Universalism proclaimed. So great a vision made him great.

It would be difficult to find more eloquent words describing Murray and his helpers than those preached by the Rev. A. B. Mayo at the funeral of the Rev. Thomas Jones (3) of Gloucester, in 1846:

"The early defenders of Universalism were plain,

earnest men, aroused to the exertion of all their energies by the presence of a great thought. The truth of God's universal love and benevolent purpose in creation possessed them. They saw it everywhere prefigured in Hebrew types, predicted by the prophets, implied in every word of Jesus, enforced in every letter of his apostles. They taught it in all places and by all methods, in parish churches and district school houses, in fields and workshops, in pulpits with stones flying around their heads, in rooms filled with the odor of nauseous drugs, in face of the reckless slander of the undignified and the quiet contempt of the dignified portion of the clergy. They were armed at all points like the old war engines that, overturned every moment, always stood right side up. They turned the tables upon the literal Calvinistic interpreters and held a text to floor every opponent. They were not moved by ridicule, for they possessed a keen sense of the ludicrous, and knew well how to expose the absurdities of the piebald theology of the churches. To the threats of their opponents they opposed Hudibrastic rhymes; to their missiles words like old Murray's: 'While I have a "thus saith the Lord" for every point of doctrine that I advance not all the stones in Boston, except they stop my breath, shall shut my mouth or arrest my testimony.' To the arguments of their adversaries, a logic like that of Ballou, *simple as the talk of a little child, strong as the tramp of a giant*. There were varieties of opinion among them, they had not all come up to the mount of their elevation by the same path, but the sublime truth, 'God's love,' burned like an undying flame in their souls, and united them like brothers. Thank God that the sleep of the church was awakened by these strong champions. Nobly they spoke their words in days when it was a disgrace in the eyes of men." (4)

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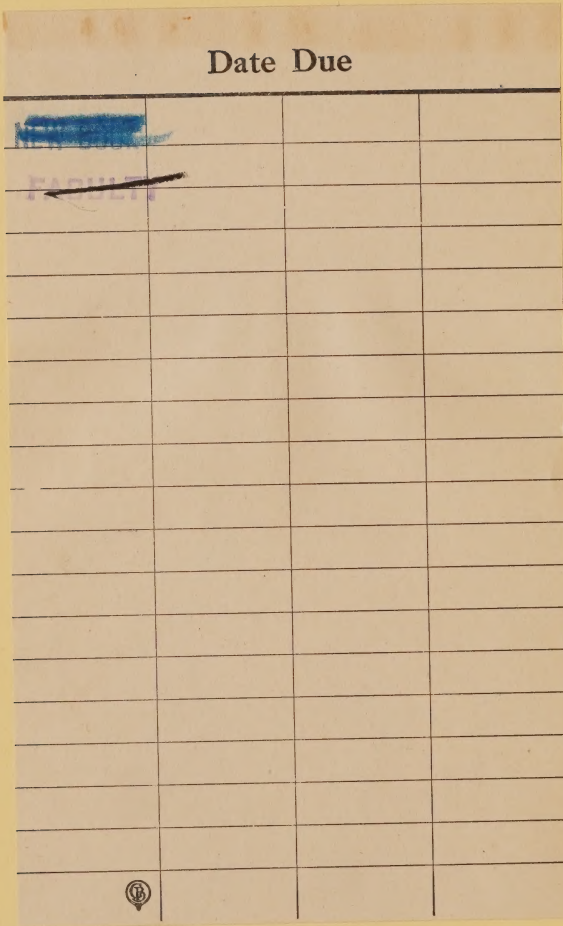
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- (13) "Universalism in America," Richard Eddy. Vol. I, p. 288. Universalist Publishing House, 1886.
- (14) *Universalist Quarterly*. Letters of John Murray, by Dr. Demarest, p. 240. April, 1871.
- (15) *Universalist Quarterly*, "Mrs. Judith Murray," by Richard Eddy, p. 142. April, 1882.
- (16) *Ibid*, p. 206. April, 1881.
- (17) *Ibid*.
- (18) *Ibid*, p. 208. April, 1881.
- (19) *Universalist Trumpet*, p. 36. Aug. 18, 1838.

Chapter XI

- (1) Diary of Rev. William Bentley, D. D., pastor of the East Church, Salem, Mass., 1784-1819.
- (2) Burial was in the Sargent tomb in the Granary Burying Ground in Boston, Sept. 4, 1815. The body was removed to Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, June 8, 1837.
- (3) Successor of Murray as pastor of the Gloucester church.
- (4) Fifty Notable Years, John G. Adams, D. D., pp. 34-35. Universalist Publishing House, 1882. Italics are the author's.

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